What Mother Knows

By

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Declaration

I certify that, except where acknowledgment is made, the work in this thesis is my own. I also certify that this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or diploma to other universities or institutions.

Executor of the estate

Abstract

This thesis examines the experience of maternity as a lens through which to refract questions concerning women's knowledge and the relationship between embodied experience and knowledge. Much work in recent and contemporary feminist epistemology is devoted to showing that there is something special about women's knowledge, either because of a unique female social standpoint or because of the nature of women's bodies and the kinds of experiences they engender. Much of this work, I argue, essentialises women, fails to recognise the generality of women's epistemic powers, and involves a commitment to the view that mere sensory experience constitutes knowledge. This latter view, I argue, is the core error in this body of work: In the guise of allowing women a special kind of knowledge, it reinforces the idea that what is distinctive about women's knowledge is its primitive, sensory character. This in turn lends comfort to the disenfranchismement of women in pregnancy and childbirth and the assumption of an expert position by the medical profession. I argue that there is no unique feature of maternity that could issue in any epistemically distinctive feature of women. While this means that simply experiencing pregnancy and maternity does not give women any special privilege in these domains, it is liberative in that it restores the epistemic equity between the sexes.

I investigate accounts of maternal experience which promise to establish the special epistemic authority of mothers. I show that the Hegelian vision of experience as knowledge seeps into many contemporary feminist texts, through the work of theorists like Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jacques Lacan. In particular, I show in chapter two that Iris Young's account of 'pregnant embodiment' inherits a private knowledge claim from Hegel through Merleau-

Ponty. In chapters three and four I show how Lacan's work carries private knowledge claims into our understanding of maternal experience. In chapter three I show how this occurs in Kristeva and, in chapter four, in Hartsock's 'feminist standpoint epistemology'. In chapter five I draw on Bataille's revision of Hegel to put right a feminist generalisation about masculine knowledge based in sexual perversity. Finally, in chapter six I show that when we dismantle the Hegelian 'myth of the given' through a Sellarsian analysis of the relation between experience and knowledge, we regain a coherent vision of the nature of our epistemic authority about experience, one that explains why pregnant women are in an especially good position to know about pregnancy, but also why they are in just as good a position to know about a lot of other things besides.*

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Gwen Nettlefold November 2001

Gwen Nettlefold died November 26, 2001. I thank Jay Garfield and Stephen Barker for their collaboration in compiling this thesis. All editorial contributions are noted in footnotes.

To Her Memory
We love you Gwen.

Phil Dowe, March 2002

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Chapter One

Simone de Beauvoir and Hegelian experience

This thesis is about one of the central domains of life: the embodied processes and experiences in maternity. But, rather than present either a metabiological or metapsychological account of these processes I take this investigation to bridge the explanatory gap between body and mind. My aim is to avoid conflating epistemology with ethics to show that maternity is neither more nor less natural than any other domain of human life. By avoiding this conflation we can see more clearly that our understanding of sex and gender is riddled with confusions and inconsistencies. The inconsistencies I will focus upon centre around our understanding that there is something uniquely natural about pregnancy, childbirth, or even about motherhood in general. I shall argue that there is no such unique natural feature of maternity. Moreover, the price we pay for acknowledging these inconsistencies in our vision of sex and gender is a complete loss of justification for the current socio-political model of western capitalist societies, summed up in the term "economic rationalism."

In this chapter I shall concentrate on two philosophers, nineteenth century natural philosopher GWF Hegel (1977)[1] and twentieth century existential feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1953)[2]. My approach to Hegel is limited by my questions about femininity and maternity, so I shall begin by looking to de Beauvoir to establish the nature of the problem. De Beauvoir's

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[1] All citations present section number from this edition of the *Phenomenology*.

[2] I recognise that this translation is inaccurate at some points, see LaCaze (1999).

use of the term "immanence" frames the question, which leads me to read Hegel's philosophy in *The Phenomenology of Spirit.*

i. sex and biology

Simone de Beauvoir opens the first book of *The Second Sex* with a biological account of reproduction, where she singles out Hegel as *the* philosopher who takes the liberty of claiming that biological differences between men and women produce different versions of psychology. She uses the terms "immanence" and "transcendence" to describe these two versions of psychology; Immanence means indwelling consciousness and I will show in the next section that de Beauvoir's use of the term describes the natural states of maternity as though these could also be described under the category of Hegel's "sense-certainty." Finally I will show that de Beauvoir's characterisation of immanence might be different from Hegel's characterisation of sense-certainty for teleological reasons. Unlike Hegel, de Beauvoir does not take meaning to be given by existence, recognising that the meaning of life is something to be discovered rather than something inscribed within our genetic material.

To put their difference another way, de Beauvoir denies that there could be any such thing as maternal instinct. She sets out to show this in her discussion of the female reproductive function, suggesting that humans could just as easily be hermaphrodites but that sexual difference is beneficial for natural selection (1953: 37nn) She summarises Plato myth:

> there were at the beginning men, women and hermaphrodites. Each individual had two faces, four arms, four legs, and two conjoined bodies. At a certain time they were split in two, and ever since each half seeks to rejoin its corresponding half. Later the gods decreed that new human beings should be created through the coupling of

> dissimilar halves. But it is only love that this story is intended to explain; division into the sexes is assumed at the outset. (1953: 37-38)

So, even though Plato explains sexual equality as an equality of that which is given, his explanation of the division of the sexes fails to rescue the woman from her now different, biologically determined destiny. De Beauvoir's idea of a hermaphrodite is more liberal: she does not see how reproductive differences leads to a social division between the private domestic sphere and the historical, philosophical, scientific and political domains so dominated by men. Plato fails to rescue the once equal flesh of the woman from the burden of childbearing and childrearing, even though he assumes that her psychology remains intact. But there is nothing to stop the woman from doing all of the domestic work, and so long as the man wants time to think and to create himself as a subject who can change the world, sexual difference can hardly be benign. And, as we shall discover, de Beauvoir sees that the childbearing woman becomes a mere object in relation to the man who can create himself as a subject for so long as the assumption about sexual difference remains intact.

De Beauvoir does not have much to say about Aristotle, except that he does not explain the sexual distinction "for if matter and form must co-operate in all action, there is no necessity for the active and passive principles to be separated in two different categories for individuals." (1953: 38) Aristotle's distinction between matter and form is mapped onto sex by associating the woman with matter and the man with form. The active and passive principles also can be mapped onto sexual differences, creating woman as the passive principle and man as the active principle. The passive principle can be used to describe feminine psychology on the grounds that the pregnant woman does not have to consciously create the foetus. Aristotle's claim that

woman is passive and that man is active suggests that men have to put more conscious effort into life, and that their efforts sustain a special human purpose; over and beyond the natural. She cites recent work by Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger as discrediting the Aristotelian view.

De Beauvoir takes as true Merleau-Ponty's view of "content that does not contribute to the formation of its aspect" because she does not think any epistemic content is given by experience. She agrees with Merleau-Ponty that "it is only through existence that facts are manifested." (1953: 39) In other words, living a human life reveals shared facts by which we come to understand our existence. The facts do not reveal themselves just in virtue of having life, however, because the facts are always learned. Or, to use de Beauvoir's words: "To be present in the world implies strictly that there exists a body which is at once a material thing in the world and a point of view towards this world; but nothing requires that this body have this or that structure." (1953: p. 39)

I agree with de Beauvoir that the body can be at once a physical thing in the world whilst at the same time having a perspective on the world. But I must warn that agreeing with her on this raises an important philosophical dilemma: how can humans be explained as having both mind and body? Moreover, when we associate the mind with psychology and the body with biology, how can we explain their interaction so as to make sense of significant gender differences?

De Beauvoir accepts Heidegger's view that we create for ourselves both a past and a future, being situated in the world as mortal creatures. But she adds that our mortality remains the sole limit for all people. The perpetuation of the species is as much everybody's responsibility as it is a limitation on life, giving reproduction metaphysical importance, but we must

stop ourselves from shifting all of this responsibility onto one sex. She rejects the reductionist metaphysics of a mind without a body (idealism) or of a soulless body (historical materialism) as strictly inconceivable, preferring the non-reductive vision of a parthenogenetic or hermaphroditic society.

It will become evident that de Beauvoir is rejecting both the Platonic view, that there could be ideas that stand alone from human conventions, and the Aristotelian view that the body is a mechanism as distinct from its form; and that the form is an essence of some sort, determining different social functions, making women essentially distinct from men. De Beauvoir sees that Aristotelian mechanism as preferable to Plato's idealism, but she does not like the fact that the physicalist reduction must be played out in terms of gender difference. There appears to be two distinct kinds of psychological states, mentioned above in the context of Aristotle's distinction between the active and passive. But it is the way in which Hegel takes up this distinction that de Beauvoir notes as crucial to recognising what is happening.

> The history of philosophy presents a wide range of views about the nature of gender difference. At first they had no scientific basis, simply reflecting social myths...With the advent of patriarchal institutions, the male laid eager claim to his posterity... Aristotle's ideas were not wholly discredited, however. Hegel held that the two sexes were of necessity different, the one active and the other passive, and of course the female would be the passive one. (1953: 39)

With the scientific revolution behind him, Hegel's world is remarkably different from Aristotle's: but he still has to make up a story about sexual difference so that his metaphysics works.

De Beauvoir disagrees with Hegel's metaphysical use of sexual difference as necessary, not only for the continuation of life, but also for the explanation of psychological differences between the sexes. He makes out that the existential nature of being a man is achieved by rising above the more natural

psychological states to develop scientific reasoning. The meaning of human existence is defined by Hegel according to his vision of the historical progress of mankind.

As de Beauvoir says, Hegel imagines that the meaning of a woman's life is sewn up in her genetic material, defining her *purpose* according to some innate knowledge. Her calling in life, from an early age, is to become some man's wife and to produce children in his name. In the following section I will show that for Hegel, the female body is programmed to produce and rear children. In Hegel's view, the woman is destined to look after others; her reward for this work is maternity.

De Beauvoir says "I do not intend to offer here a philosophy of life: and I do not care to take sides prematurely in the dispute between the mechanistic and the purposive or teleological philosophies." (1953: 41) Hegel can be read as traversing this divide between the mechanistic and teleological philosophies, and it seems to me that the genuine lack of attention to Hegel's claims about sexual difference outside feminist and cultural studies circles leads to a genuine misrecognition of his metaphysics.

I shall turn now to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In this section I have traced, with de Beauvoir, a sketch of sexual psychology as though there are two distinct kinds of human nature. If it is the case that sexual difference goes beyond reproductive function to produce two kinds of human psychology, the woman is destined to be a mother and to know how to mother from birth. Biology is destiny.[3] But if it is not the case, as de Beauvoir suggests, Hegel fails to adequately explain human psychology.

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[3] Freud famously says this, citing Napoleon, as though man and woman are different countries.

ii Hegel's notion of sense certainty

Hegel has attracted some attention from those working in the western analytic tradition on contemporary theories of mind.[4] Elder (1980) argues that Hegel divides his philosophy into three main categories: physical philosophy; social philosophy; and philosophy of history. Concentrating on the physical philosophy, Elder shows that Hegel explains everything in terms of two sorts of concepts: physical concepts and psychological concepts. Physical concepts include concepts of material objects and concepts of mind; and psychological concepts include concepts of psychological objects and concepts of rational agency. Elder argues that Hegel needs to provide a physicalist explanation in which he uses non-psychological predicates to explain humans as the embodiment of ideas, and as players of roles created by history. But he also needs to succeed in using non-psychological predicates to explain that individuals have the choice to model their behaviour, and not to simply accept that which is given. I will turn now to Hegel to see how this works.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* is divided into three main sections. His physical philosophy of mind is described in the first section, which is titled *Consciousness* and is divided again into three: *sense-certainty; perception; forces and the understanding.* Sense-certainty is the first of three steps in consciousness, and is superseded by "perception." Perception, in turn, rises above itself to become what Hegel calls "force and the understanding." (§132-165) This latter phase prepares the conscious being for self-consciousness, which is divided into the following phases: "Self- Certainty" (§166-177); "Independence and Dependence of Self consciousness: Lordship and

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[4] See for example de Vries (1988) and Elder (1981).

Bondage" (§178-196); and "Freedom of Self-consciousness." (§197-230). The conscious being must move through all of these phases in order to enter the stage of Reason (§231-437). Reason is raised to the truth of Spirit when the conscious being is certain that its truth is its own, and that the world is as it is. (§438)

This first section describes the states of consciousness associated with feelings and sensations in our body in sense-certainty; followed by states of consciousness in which we develop our perceptual knowledge in relation to commonsense objects and behaviours to develop commonsense understanding. But commonsense understanding is not what human life is all about, according to Hegel, leaving that more natural way of acquiring knowledge to women and to slaves while select men get on with the real work of tending to historical development. The issue of selection criteria brings maternity to the foreground of my inquiry into Hegel's theory of the mental. I choose maternity because it is often thought to hold a special clue to human nature: that vital clue will soon to be lost to the human genome project.

Hegel's sense-certainty is the most basic version of consciousness, shared between all conscious creatures and explaining our conscious existence as the ground upon which all human understanding develops. Sense-certainty just happens, without any active participation on behalf of the conscious being who simply experiences whatever presents itself to awareness. In Hegel's view, the conscious being only knows a succession of physical objects in sense-certainty. There is no attempt to grasp the objects notionally, or to have a linguistic comprehension of an object in relation to anything else. There is no awareness of the object's parts or qualities. Instead, there is only awareness that there is an object, giving certainty of that object's existence. The object is

sensed and its existence is confirmed because, in Hegel's view, the sensation is the most primordial way of knowing anything. (§90-91)

The crucial issue for determining whether Hegel's explanation of psychological predicates works towards a physicalist description will include whether or not the states contain some pre-ordained meaning, or whether the meanings of the states are determined by human convention. Hegel argues that the states are meaningless even though he claims that the latter states come to occupy meaningful roles. But, even in this early stage of just having the states of consciousness there is some knowledge. The knowledge given by sense-certainty is a version of empiricist sense-data which, when pushed, does not explain anything. I will examine the status of knowledge given by the senses in more detail in chapter 2.

Hegel's version of sense-data is supposed to explain what it is like to have consciousness and is best understood if we imagine that our awareness is played out on a kind of inner screen, with a succession of impressions each vanishing into the next.[5] Moreover, Hegel uses demonstratives to explain this kind of awareness. There is already someone present in this consciousness, and this person already has a vocabulary which includes terms like "this" "here" "now." There is also a vague recognition of the self in sense-certainty, but only in so far as the object is in awareness. So there is vague self-consciousness in sense-certainty, enabling the conscious being to read off the environment and to register various kinds of sensations in

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[5] De Vries (1988) suggests otherwise but I take Hegel's claims about sexual difference to show this is the case as will become clear in the course of this thesis. See Dennett (1991) for a good discussion of the myth of the so-called Cartesian theatre.

consciousness. The ability to register sensations requires only that there is consciousness, since for Hegel the 'I' is nothing more than the knowing. (§92)

Neither the self as a subject nor the object registered are defined as the kinds of things they are; they are merely registered to form the ground for self-consciousness. But this primitive version of self-consciousness is also the ground for developing the capacity to transcend the limitations of the physical teleology enabling men to create the socio-political history of mankind. Whether or not one will be able to go beyond the limits of their natural capacities will be determined primarily by sex. All of women's knowledge will be predetermined by her biology, whereas man's knowledge can be self-determined. But in Hegel's view, we each begin to identify in sense-certainty as a self who has immediate knowledge, given by the senses.

Hegel postulates that each sensation is superseded by the next and the conscious being can do little more than use the demonstrative term "This." But the term "This" does not help others understand that which Hegel claims is the truth of sense-certainty. Sense-certainty is a purely subjective way of knowing which is not at once intersubjective. For, in Hegel's view, the true meaning of sense-certainty is an inner episode which is deeply private and sensuous. He says "it is just not possible for us to ever say, or express in words, a sensuous being that we *mean*." (§97) Sense-certainty therefore fails to meet the inter subjectivity requirement by which others may agree that the conscious being's knowledge is true or false. No-one else has access to the conscious being's knowledge in Sense-certainty so that knowledge can be checked and verified. Sense-certainty is thus open to scepticism.[6]

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[6] I present a detailed analysis of the scepticism of knowledge about sensations in Chapter two.

To avoid the sceptical view that different beings sense the same things differently, Hegel claims that the *meaning* of sense-certainty is "universal" rather than particular: each conscious being has the same types of sensations when faced with the same sorts of objects. (§102) If we are facing a tree, for instance, we each see the same thing; if we are facing a house, we also see the same thing; and so on. The universal nature of sense-certainty is important, in his view, because the person with sense-certainty cannot say what she means; or express her knowledge about sensations.

Space and Time play an important role in sense-certainty to ensure the succession of sensations so that each 'Here' and 'Now,' vanishes into the next, making it impossible to focus on anything. There is constant flux, or change in sense-certainty. (§94)

There may be a tree presenting itself to consciousness, for instance, as 'This' tree which is 'Here.' But, turning around, there is no longer a tree. The tree is negated by the house which is 'here.' But, he says, the 'here' is constant and the objects inconstant. Each awareness of 'here' and 'now' is replaced by the next, being different from the last and therefore a negation. Day is negated by night and the tree is negated by a house, and so on. (§98-99) That which remains, according to Hegel, is *"pure being."*

Pure being is consciousness itself. But, for Hegel, having consciousness is sufficient for knowing the objects which are presented to consciousness. As Hegel describes it, immediate knowledge is the constant stream of negation and mediation in space and time of things presenting themselves to consciousness. The negation is brought about by the fact that the tree is replaced by a house, which is not-tree. The replacement of a tree by a house is possible only because the conscious being is situated in space and time. Time enables the consciousness to move so that the house is a negative in relation

to a tree. Each awareness of 'here' and 'now' is replaced by the next, being different from the last and therefore a negation. Each successive image or sensation in inner space negates the last in a perpetual movement of supersession.

iii Hegel, de Beauvoir, women and knowledge

I said above that Hegel distinguishes three levels of conscious development. There is consciousness, self-consciousness and reason. Consciousness is divided again into three phases. The first, self certainty, I have discussed. My concern in this section is with the second, the universal consciousness of sensory knowledge, which Hegel associates with women.

In this section I will show that Hegel does not attribute any self-consciousness to women, leaving them in the most immature phase of the *phenomenology*, described as consciousness. But, this basic consciousness is far from limited to passive awareness of self-presenting sensations inasmuch as the development of all non-inferential commonsense knowledge is explained in the next two stages. In *perception* the images and sensations are impressed into inner space as they are in sense-certainty. But in perception the *meaning* of the prior stage is negated by the "principle of the object." He says the principle of the object is universal. (§112) The principle of the object enables a mediation between a shared principle, or concept, and the felt quality, or sensation. The shared principle, or concept, enables the conscious being to develop an awareness of difference so that the immediate "this" of sense-certainty is superseded by the concept. (§113)

The supersession occurs because a concept is introduced to represent the object. The concept is an abstract principle and, as such, the concept is not the sensuous quality of the impression given by sense-certainty. So the concept is

not the "this" to which Hegel refers as the unmediated but nonetheless meaningful impression of sense-certainty. He says the concept of perception is *not* this. The negation of the sensuous "this," such as the impression of a tree, could be construed as leaving the conscious being with *not* this and therefore nothing. The negation of the sensation with a concept could be construed as leaving consciousness empty of content. But the concept is not *nothing*, in Hegel's view, because the concept is determinate. So the concept is present to consciousness even though it takes the place of the sensuous content which preceded the concept. In Hegel's words, the concept is a "determinate Nothing, the Nothing of a content, viz. of the This." (§113)

Nevertheless, in Hegel's view, the sensory quality of consciousness is still present. In *perception*, however, the "sense-element" takes on a new form: no longer

> as the singular item that is 'meant', but as a universal, or as that which will be defined as a *property*. *Supersession* exhibits its true twofold meaning which we have seen in the negative: it is at once a *negating* and a *preserving* [7] Our Nothing, as the Nothing of the This, preserves its immediacy and is itself sensuous, but it is a universal immediacy. Being, however is a universal in virtue of its having mediation or the negative within it; when it *expresses* this in its immediacy it is a *differentiated, determinate* property. (§113)

In his discussion of sense-certainty, Hegel claims that the meaning is impressed upon what we could call the "inner screen" and that, as such, this

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[7] In *sense-certainty* Hegel discusses the negative as being both negating and preserving in the context of the "now." The preservation takes place in consciousness, which is not an actual day or an actual night. The consciousness is the negative because it preserves the "now" of night. But the truth becomes stale as night turns to day. Day is *not* night. Negation is sense certainty is thus mediated through time. But the knowledge of day and night is preserved. See § 96.

sensuous meaning is deeply individual. But, he argues, language is more truthful than the individual sensuous meaning. (§97) Even in sense-certainty Hegel claims we make basic utterances, like "this," or "it is" but these utterances are too general, leading to a kind of refutation of what we mean to say. The meaning is held in the particular sensation and the utterance is too general to hold any truth. (He says "it is just not possible for us ever to say, or express in words, a sensuous being that we *mean*." (§97)) But, in perception, the conscious being learns to utter a universal truth about her sensation. She does this, in Hegel's view, by distinguishing the properties of the object. Previously, however, the properties could not be discerned because the objects were negated by moments in time and space. In perception, the objects are negated by the concepts of properties. In so doing, the perception contains two "immediately self-differentiating moments:" one being the active pointing out of properties and the other being the passive event in which the object is impressed into consciousness. (§111)

In other words, perception enables the conscious being to know the object as a whole entity which can be divided into parts. This is possible because there are two functions: one active and one passive. The active function is conceptual because it requires the use of shared principles and is "logically necessitated." As I will show below, this is possible because the community plays a role in perception. The passive function, on the other hand, is the continuation of sense-certainty, in which objects impress themselves upon consciousness. Hegel uses the example of salt. Salt is 'here' as in sense-certainty, but it is also understood by a perceiver as having different properties: salt is white, tart, cubical and so on. He claims that the sensation is preserved through the development of concepts about the different properties of salt. (§111-113)

Only one thing is sensed in perception, but the conscious being develops an ability to mediate her sensations with concepts. Hegel brings the community into his discussion of perception, indicating that the conscious being's knowledge makes a developmental turn in which other conscious beings take a part. The conscious being thus develops an ability to determine the many properties of things as the sorts of properties they are. (§115) He says the objective essence is found not in the subject's own awareness, but in the community. But the object is what counts in perception and the awareness itself remains unnoticed. The conscious being learns about the object from the community. The knowledge of the particular type of object is universal, in Hegel's view, because knowledge about perception is shared universally within the community. He locates the truth of perception in the universal expression of an object's unity, rather than in the qualitative sensation. But, he says, from the broader communal perspective, the knowledge in *perception* is incorrect. Hegel indicates that, unlike the merely conscious perceiver, the *self-conscious* members of the community are able to discern the object as a particular object. He says the realisation that the object is particular drives the perceiver back to sense-certainty: the universal perception is negated again by the sensation of particular object/subject. (§117)

Despite Hegel's claim that the cycle is completed and has returned to its sensuous beginnings, he says a new truth emerges. The ability to see the object universally with others in the community adds knowledge to the once immediate sense-certainty. The knowledge is no longer a passive impression, being instead the combination of the impression with a shared concept. The ability to break down the whole into parts also adds knowledge. Each object is more complicated than it first appeared in the passive state of sense-certainty. In Hegel's view, the apparent return to sense-certainty is not really a return at

all, because a new truth has emerged: a truth that was impossible in sense-certainty. Hegel says that the new truth emerges because the subject of sense-certainty is now able to see the untruth of sensuality. The subject is apparent as a simple 'I,' he says, who has a grasp of universal concepts for objects. The new truth emerges through the division of a once singular stream of impressions into a two-fold movement between the concept and the sensation.

Sense-certainty is recognisably false in Hegel's view because the cycle of perception enables the subject to see herself as an individual perceiver in relation to the community. But while perceptual knowledge is only universal, she is not really an individual in Hegelian terms, because the individual must rise above all sensual knowledge. The perceiver is not able to rise above sensual knowledge because she is only developing the notion that truth is conceptual and that impressions cannot substitute for truth. But, Hegel says, the perceiver is *"reflected out of the True and into itself."* He says the inwards reflection mingles the basic self consciousness with the "pure apprehension" of sense-certainty. Basic self consciousness therefore emerges in perception. This conscious reflection enables a shift from the simple apprehension of sense-certainty, in Hegel's view. (§118)

Certain tensions nevertheless arise in Hegel's view, because each thing is perceived in relation to other things and to other knowers. The merely conscious perceiver mistakenly thinks she has the concept of a particular perception. But, Hegel emphasises, perceptual knowledge is only universal. The conscious being of perception has not yet developed any particular knowledge. Instead she shares the universal observational knowledge she has learnt from others in the community. In Hegel's view, the knowledge gained in perception is always universal even though the perceiver mistakes

her knowledge to be particular. The subject's perceptual truth is not specific to one person but shared between everyone.

Hegel refers to perception as "sound common sense" but argues that such knowledge is often poor when mistakenly taken as the richest form of knowing. He says that the perceiver sees herself as having a grasp of abstract essences, or "mental entities" because she comes to see that things are impressed in consciousness. This is poor, in Hegel's view, because the perceiver contradicts herself when she says one thing is true and then claims the same is an untruth. The bent stick in water is an example of perceptual untruth, although Hegel does not offer an example. The stick looks bent in water and looks straight when removed from the water. In perceptual knowledge, there is no way of showing whether the stick is really bent or straight.

He says the richer form of knowledge

> recognizes them *in their specific determinateness* as well, and is therefore master over them, whereas perceptual understanding [or sound 'common sense'] takes them for the truth and is led on by them from one error to another. (§132)

The perception nevertheless combines an individual experience with a universal concept or *notion* of the object in question. But, he argues, in perception the person has not realised that the notion, or concept is a shared principle. Without this recognition of the principle of an object, Hegel says the person cannot yet properly recognise itself in relation to the object. In *perception*, then, Hegel argues that the conscious being brings universal concepts to particular objects in the world. Importantly, the concepts are universal because they are shared within the community of knowers. Both the conscious beings of perception and the objects are universal. (§111) The conscious beings are characterised as "I," but a universal rather than

particular "I." Becoming a particular "I" entails moving beyond the sensual field of universals and putting to death experience in pursuit of the freedom of reason. But, in Hegel's view, women cannot move beyond the sensual. As shown, however, sensual knowledge is already linguistic knowledge so he does not suggest women cannot speak. It is just that sensual knowledge does not enable women to develop any sense of themselves as individuals; or to develop any interests beyond that which lies immediately before them.

In Hegel's view, women are members of the community and have a place in the "ethical order." But their place requires that they tend to matters of sensuality: the production of children, tending to their husbands emotional needs and taking care of death. To develop an understanding of these matters, women must go through the final stage of development Hegel describes in his section on *consciousness*. Note that this stage is a preliminary step for males, but a final step for females.

Hegel suggests that the *self-consciousness* of the conscious being depends upon other conscious beings showing her that she can become self-conscious through her awareness of an object. (§133) The conscious being must realise that other conscious beings make the same observations of the same objects. (§134) This realisation is made possible through mutual agreement about the diverse properties of an object in order to see that each has the same sense-contents. (§135) But first, in Hegel's view, the *understanding* must develop through the movement of two opposing *forces*.

In his account of "force and the understanding," Hegel describes the movement of two forces: one which can be expressed and the other which cannot. I suggest that this is the turning of linguistic concepts on perceptions. Hegel describes a sorting of properties and things and a perpetual movement of the two forces, each vanishing into the other. The wheel of cognition is

really starting to turn now in the Hegelian *consciousness* as things move from their unexpressed sensuality into expressible *notions*. (§135-137)

The development of notions is an important step towards self-consciousness, in Hegel's view, but the conscious being does not yet see them as such. He says the conscious being mistakenly thinks the notions exist in the objects themselves. He says self-consciousness remains negative, or not present, because the notions absorb the conscious being's attention. The notions are the positive forces so long as the consciousness keeps vanishing into the things it is perceiving. The notions keep drawing the conscious being's attention towards the object so that she cannot yet clearly see that they appear in her own consciousness. (§143)

Hegel says that, in understanding, the self is "empty," or void because it is not aware of its own experiences, as it was in Sense-certainty. The qualitative nature of sensuous experience is sublated into to the perceptual concepts in Hegel's vision of understanding. Nothing positive is known in Sense-certainty because of the endless succession of moments vanishing into each other because the conscious being is glued to her inner screen. But, even though the objects are still impressed on the inner screen in perception, the understanding draws the conscious being's attention into the external world. The perception includes inner content, but the awareness becomes outwardly directed through the development of concepts. Inner experience stands in a negative relation to perceptions because the latter can be expressed to confirm the positive existence of the object. (§147)

In Hegel's view, perception develops as a play of forces and movements in which the concepts are properly aligned with sensations. He says understanding deepens only because the subject grasps certain Laws. These Laws correctly align inner sensations with concepts derived from others in

the world. In Hegel's view, the Notion is expressed in language, enabling the conscious being to stabilise the succession of sensations. Hegel says the Law is the universal principle that stabilises the flux of the inner to integrate sensations with concepts. He indicates that language enables the conscious being to see that others see things as she does. The conscious being thus comes to understand her sensations as universal rather than particular. Moreover, through language her perceptions are expressible and determinate rather than being deeply private and indeterminate.

Hegel argues that sensations and concepts are bound together through the dialectical movements, relating inner and outer, subject and object, self and world. Through these movements Hegel argues that we finally see "behind the so called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world." But, alas, he says, "there is nothing to be seen unless *we* go behind it ourselves, as much in order that we may see, as that there may be something behind there which can be seen." (§165) Moving behind the alleged curtain takes Hegel into the second level of conscious development: self-consciousness. Those who attain self-consciousness can stand back from the inner screen and claim it as their own particular consciousness.

In Hegel's words, "self-consciousness is *desire* in general." (§167) He indicates that the conscious being's desire enables the distinction between self as desiring, on the one hand; and the desired object outside the self, on the other. He says desire enables the conscious being to negate his experience of the object in order to get a positive grasp of himself as conscious. Through desire, then, the merely conscious being is able to stand back from the screen and claim it as self in opposition to the desired object. But as I will argue below, Hegel's prejudice about the sexes suggests the conscious being must be male to reach this stage.

Hegel characterises the positive self-consciousness as "being-for-itself," as distinct from the negative consciousness of the previous stages, in which the self is characterised as "being-in-itself." (§173) The objects, once experienced as being-in-itself, now enter into being-for-itself in the properly defined self-world distinction. The conscious being stands back from his inner screen and distinguishes himself from the succession of sense-impressions. He is properly able to conceive of himself as a particular consciousness in distinction from the world.

Hegel refers to this knowledge as "commonsense knowledge." The community comes into play, in which everyone has authority about immediate perceptions, or non-inferential knowledge. This could be seen as third person knowledge, which carries less authority in Hegel's view than the first person knowledge he describes in later chapters. Or it can be understood as first person sensory knowledge, as women's epistemic specialty, in opposition to first person abstract knowledge, which is men's epistemic specialty. Hegel says the *self-conscious* subject develops only through *desire* for gratification from others, by seeing that others have something which the conscious being does not have.[8] Looking to others for satisfaction of desire

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[8] Willett (1995) argues that the desire is better understood as "will - or what for Hegel must be a bold indifference to life and death - [which] seeks to establish that it is free from nature." (1995: 110) She says that the important negation of the "in-itself" is better understood as an act of will. That is, the self-conscious being *wills* the experience out of consciousness so that it can achieve a properly human teleology. Willett argues that "[t]he problem with Hegel's analysis of the foundation of recognition is that it allows for only a single concept of the moral person, and this concept defines the person as anti-woman, antinature, and anti-African" (1995:112). The one-sided development is the development of knowledge as determined by a white middle class male.

nevertheless enables the conscious being to see its own consciousness reflected back.

The conscious being comes to see herself as others see her. For women to see themselves as closer to nature than to the cultured lives of men, for example, they must have some self-certainty. Men, on the other hand, will see themselves reflected by others as being more alienated from nature than women. But, if women were to reach this stage of self-certainty, it is not clear why they *would* agree that they are any closer to nature than men. (It is more likely that only men see their superiority reflected in the eyes of their women.)

Hegel's discussion of *life* in the early part of his discussion of self-consciousness influences the views of Lloyd and others who discuss the master/slave narrative.[9] Being-in-itself is a simple 'I' in Hegel's view, and must develop via desire into the complex self-conscious 'I.' Women thus characterised are subjects, but they do not know themselves as such so they do not have any of the freedom which Hegel associates with the subject of self-consciousness. Women, when associated with being-in-itself, have the preliminary phases of consciousness unfolding through sense-certainty to

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She concludes that, read as a first person narrative of development, "Hegel's presuppositions concerning childhood conceal the one-sided mythology of a patriarchal culture." (1995:113) Read as phylogeny, on the other hand, this narrative tells us about "feminine gatherers then masculine hunters, and finally an ethical community whose common principles presuppose shared rites of manhood." (1995:112) I will have more to say about the privileging of abstract knowledge, or "culture" over concrete existence (or "nature") in chapters four and five.

[9] See Appendix, and also Willett (1995) and Oliver (1996).

understanding. The female subject has awareness of things around her, including having awareness of her body, but is not aware of herself as a particular individual. She remains in the sphere of life as though she never desires certainty for its own sake. Those who have self-certainty no longer have time for life, except when at home with the family. Women's duty to care for life and death does not give them time to develop the self-certainty Hegel takes to be necessary for developing what is in fact *inferential* knowledge.

In his later chapter on "The Ethical Order," Hegel claims that the two sexes form an antithesis in which men and women are directly opposed, but who come together in the synthesis of family. (§459) They join in marriage to become "universal ethical beings." In marriage, women are understood by Hegel in terms of universal consciousness; and men as particular consciousness. Marriage unites the two types of consciousness, enabling men to access inner experience through their women; and women to access reason through their men.[10]

Having only universal consciousness, women are apparently unable to develop self-certainty. He says they are alienated from desire, and from Particularity. (§457) Instead, they continue to thrive on a sensuous version of

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[10] Oliver (1996), indicates a contradiction in Hegel's argument. On one hand Hegel argues that "femininity" assumes that woman, and her "ethical" domain of family is natural and unconscious. This contrasts his view that family duties "are properly ethical only insofar as they are not merely natural and unconscious, but rather willed and conscious (1996:70)". The contradiction lies in the question: how can something be both unconscious and ethical? As Oliver points out "[e]thical relations are relations that take the individual beyond nature and move him into culture", yet Woman is supposedly both "ethical" and immersed in nature.

knowing in which things are passively presented to consciousness as the kinds of things they are. It is also worth noting that their maternal experiences, like pregnancy and childbirth, are not had by men. Hegel's conception of private knowledge indicates that those who do not have these feminine experiences cannot properly know about them. But, in maternity, as in life, consciousness does all the work, and women are passive observers of everything which takes place around them.

Men's consciousness, on the other hand, actively develops through desire into a recognition of consciousness as their own, and a subsequent ability to control their consciousness. Reason preserves the sensuous only as a foundation for knowledge about science, history, culture, religion and ethics. The more men develop their knowledge, in Hegel's view, the more they gain understanding in the context of notions or ideas rather than experiences. The more abstract notional knowledge is the movement of Spirit, he argues, to understand fully the History of humanity. Nevertheless, Hegel does not entirely dispense with experience in the most absolute forms of knowledge. His account of the dialectical forces enables an understanding of concepts which are grounded in sensuous qualities.

Hegel's claim that "true meaning" is embedded in sensations suggests that we know sensations as the sensations they are just by having them. We are unable to express their meaning without the appropriate conceptual development because all we have is the sensation and we are unable to make anything more of it. The sensation gives us a quality which we are not yet able to quantify, or to distinguish as being part of the self in distinction from the world. Mature knowledge, on the other hand, has a quality of self-hood in relation to an inference. The qualitative component of mature knowledge

is of thinking - awareness of the thoughts - rather than awareness something in the world.

In sense-certainty there is a basic quality of sensing something. This could be visual, auditory, olfactory or tactile sensations of the immediate environment – images, sounds, smells and feels. Or it could be inner experiences of tickles or gurgles or pains. But for sense-certainty to count as *knowledge*, these sensations and feelings would need to be seen *as* the tree in front of her, or felt *as* a tickle. It is reasonable to suppose that sensations register the environment, in other words, but this needs not be an epistemic claim. To claim that we know something about the sensations indicates that we can specify that we are having a particular type of sensations. This, in turn, requires that we meet the inter subjectivity requirements by which we are able to make something of our own sensations according to what we know about others' sensations.

I will now show that de Beauvoir can be read as claiming that experiences are not a type of immature knowledge, in which case immanence and transcendence need not be mutually exclusive. I will argue that these terms are better understood as denoting two distinct domains: experience and knowledge.

iv de Beauvoir on immanence as non-knowledge

In earlier sections of *The Second Sex* de Beauvoir dwells on the Hegelian idea that men live out their immanence only through women in the form of, first their mothers, and later their wives. Her discussion of immanence develops in her discussion of the myths that men construct regarding women. Here she turns to a discussion of erotic desire. It is in her discussion of erotic desire that she gives us insight into immanence as non-knowledge.

The first myth in her discussion is taken from the *Book of Genesis*. In de Beauvoir's words:

> Eve is given to Adam so that through her he may accomplish his transcendence, and she draws him into the night of immanence. His mistress, in the vertigoes of pleasure, encloses him again in the opaque clay of that dark matrix which the mother fabricated for her son and from which he desires to escape. He wishes to possess her: behold him the possessed himself! Odour, moisture, fatigue, ennui - a library of books has described this gloomy passion of a consciousness made flesh. (1953: 196)

What is Adam's project, in de Beauvoir's view, if not to possess Eve? But de Beauvoir also indicates that Adam does not succeed precisely because Eve draws him into the night where consciousness is lost to sensation. He no longer dwells in the light of reason - the only place where he has the transcendent liberty for which we must all yearn. He is as possessed as she is in those moments of sensory awareness that are *just* odour; *just* moisture; *just* fatigue. They are not moments, as Hegel may suggest, in which an odour presents itself *as* an odour; or moisture *as* moisture; or fatigue *as* fatigue. For de Beauvoir they are simply sensations of which there is no certainty concerning their general character; sensations as the flesh rise up and engulf any conscious thoughts. Experience is a "dark matrix" which is distinct from the ability to reflect upon experiences in order to know about them.

Beauvoir's depiction of sensory experiences is less Hegelian than Bataillian. Georges Bataille's philosophical interest lies in the epistemic nature of inner experiences, such as intense erotic experiences alongside laughter, ecstasy and violent experiences like sacrifice and death. In his book *Inner Experience* (1954), Bataille argues that these experiences take us beyond the limit of Hegelian knowledge. According to Bataille, these adult

experiences are characterised as non-knowledge; not as an immature version of knowledge.

Bataille is a contemporary of de Beauvoir's and they, along with Sartre,[11] Lacan and various other French intellectuals of their time, attended the lectures on Hegel presented by Alexandre Kojeve. De Beauvoir mentions Bataille only twice in *The Second Sex* - and he does not stand out as a figure for whom she holds much admiration. Nonetheless, she does note that Bataille characterises eroticism as a state "in which the individual exceeds the bounds of self;" and "seeks to lose himself in the infinite mystery of the flesh." (1953: 183) All that counts is the experience itself, not the fact that it is the experience of a particular subject, or individual. De Beauvoir thus indicates that eroticism enables men to lose their identities as particular individuals. De Beauvoir also notes that, for Bataille, the woman does not appear "simply as an object of pleasure;" (1953: 183) a point with which I agree.[12] In other words, for Bataille, eroticism enables one to move into a

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[11] The contention exists, however, in the relationship between Sartre and de Beauvoir and what we may conclude from Sartre's ideas about Bataille. Sartre privileges the human project as valuable to human life. Indeed, the fulfilment of freely chosen projects is a necessary component of the Sartrean version of transcendence. Bataille, however, does not privilege the project and is criticised by Sartre on this issue. It is a common assumption that de Beauvoir's philosophy is faithful to Sartre's, in which case she would have to uphold the importance of projects in her work. But, projects and transcendence aside, there is something about de Beauvoir's vision of immanence that resonates with Bataille's.

[12] This is a contentious issue. Nancy Hartsock takes the opposing view on Bataille, claiming that he epitomises "masculine perversity." I will present Hartsock's position in Chapter five, where I also examine Bataille's claims in more detail.

state in which one is no longer conscious of being a distinct self, or a distinct subject. But nor is their consciousness of an Other, or an object. He thus indicates that transcendence into self-consciousness does not eliminate the possibility of pure experience.

Bataille's philosophy begins at Hegel's point of closure. Hegel presents a closed system of knowledge, from the immature knowledge of Sense-certainty to the abstract knowledge in which linguistic concepts are independent of sensations. Believing himself to have developed his own knowledge to the point of Hegelian closure, Bataille identifies "a blind spot" in Hegel's understanding. (1988b: 110) In Bataille's words

> if the spot absorbs one's attention: it is no longer the spot which loses itself in knowledge, but *knowledge which loses itself* in it. (1988b: 110-111) [my italics].

The spot is the sense-certainty which, in Hegel's vision, becomes lost once we use abstract concepts competently. According to Hegel, sense-certainty "is shrouded to become a mere shadowy outline" once knowledge advances. (§28) But, in Bataille's view, there are times that knowledge is lost in experience. At such times, according to Bataille, we become so absorbed in our experience that we lose sight of any abstract concepts, including the awareness of ourselves as subjects. Hegel does not account for this. But Bataille further argues that, contra Hegel, experience is non-knowledge.

Remember that, for Hegel, sense-certainty is an immature version of knowing that we lose once we are able to use abstract concepts. Sensations are negated by and sublated into the more developed concepts of comprehension. It is therefore impossible, in Hegel's vision, to have pure sensations in the absence of the associated concept once you have advanced down the knowledge trail. Bataille, on the other hand, sees that pure sensation is not

always negated and sublated into comprehension. Moreover, for Bataille, these pure experiences are not an immature version of knowing. They are not knowledge at all in Bataille's view. They are, rather, pure experience. In intense erotic experience, for instance, we may be so absorbed by the sensations that, in Bataille's words

> Experience attains in the end the fusion of object and subject, being as subject non-knowledge, as object the unknown (1988b: 9)

In other words, for Bataille, there is no distinction between self and world, or between subject and object in such cases.[13] Without this distinction, according to Bataille, there is no knowledge whatsoever. The conscious being is not aware of herself as having the experience, nor is she aware of the experience as any particular type of experience. There is a type of rudimentary awareness but, as mentioned above in de Beauvoir's comments on erotic immanence, this rudimentary awareness amounts to darkness. The awareness of experience is therefore not knowledge because the light of reason is cast upon experience only after the fact, in Bataille's view.

Bataille claims that we can reflect on inner experiences at some later time in order that we can comprehend them. De Beauvoir shows that this is possible simply in virtue of writing about erotic experiences. She describes that experience above as "night of immanence," "opaque clay," "dark matrix." Metaphor is used to direct us towards sensation; or to give us a sense of something that is difficult to define literally.[14] It could be said that metaphor evokes both transcendence and immanence within us: it evokes our

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[13] Sports people speak of "flow" as another example of an incidental experience when this fusion takes place. I am grateful to Cynthia Townley for pointing this out.

transcendence in virtue of the fact that we need to be competent language users to understand metaphor - we need to think about the metaphor to interpret it; and the metaphor evokes immanence inasmuch as it makes us feel something - it evokes our sensual existence.

De Beauvoir's use of metaphor to describe immanence suggests that her conception of immanence is more akin to Bataille than to Hegel. Recall that Hegel sees immanence and transcendence as being mutually exclusive within the individual. For Hegel we are either immanent, particularly if we are female, or transcendent in the case of a mature male. Moreover, in Hegel's view, women cannot transcend experience, and depending upon men for reason. Men, in his view, rise above the passive consciousness of experience, and depend upon women to reflect their inner lives. As Lloyd says, Hegel does this to exonerate male reason without fully sacrificing the sensual realm. (1983: 84) Lloyd claims that the association between women and "natural feeling" gives them their own moral superiority in the relationship between the sexes. But it is my view that there is a better way to explain how we know about experiences without casting them into the primordial soup as immature knowledge. (See Appendix 1 for a detailed analysis of Lloyd.)

I am suggesting that de Beauvoir takes this alternative view. She argues that women are as able to reason as men. But she also claims that men are as vulnerable to experiences as women. Unlike Hegel, de Beauvoir does not claim that women and men have two fundamentally different types of existence. She says

> to say that Woman is Flesh, to say that the Flesh is Night and Death, or that it is the splendour of the Cosmos, is to abandon terrestrial truth and soar into an empty

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[14] I discuss metaphor as evoking experience in more detail in Chapter three.

> sky. For man also is flesh for woman; and woman is not merely a carnal object; and the flesh is clothed in a special significance for each person and in each experience. And likewise it is quite true that woman - like man - is a being rooted in nature; she is more enslaved to the species than is the male, her animality is more manifest, but in her as in him the given traits are taken on through the fact of existence, she belongs also to the human realm. To assimilate her to Nature is simply to act from prejudice. (1953: 285)

In de Beauvoir's vision, men like Hegel take a purely selfish vision of women as bodies to satiate desire and to produce offspring. But this is merely an indication of men's fantasy to transcend their bodies - and soar into an empty sky. I gather the empty sky is the realm of abstract ideas which lose touch with a concrete reality.

De Beauvoir says that each experience has its own significance depending upon the context. She indicates that women may not be in control of pregnancy, for instance, but that there are also times when men lose control of their flesh. When their organ swells, for instance, and they thrash around in the midst of desire. To be sure, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation make women's animality more manifest. But it is prejudicial to assume, on the basis of the maternal function, that women are more like animals than men.

De Beauvoir concludes that

> As a matter of fact, man, like woman, is flesh, therefore passive, the plaything of his hormones and of the species, the restless prey of his desires. And she, like him, in the midst of carnal fever, is a consenting, a voluntary gift, an activity; they live out in their several fashions the strange ambiguity of existence made body. In those combats where they think they confront one another, it is really against the self that each one struggles, projecting into the partner that part of the self which is repudiated; instead of living out the ambiguities of their situation, each tries to make the other bear the abjection and tries to reserve the honour for the self. (1953: 737)

De Beauvoir clearly states that the adult human experience of immanence is not restricted to the female reproductive body. It is, rather, a feature of adult embodied experience, irrespective of sex. Men, she reminds us, are as embodied as women in their servitude to the conditions of embodiment. Together, in erotic passion, they face an ambiguity as they find themselves experiencing something that Hegel denies - immanence in the face of transcendence. This is a gift when it is offered voluntarily and by consent of both parties. But it is an ambiguous gift inasmuch as the experience takes each human beyond the bounds of the self-aware individual into a state of awareness that is selfless. The experience is selfless because it is immanent: in inner experience there is no distinction between self and world; or self and other. Without the awareness of distinction, there is no self in experience. There is no knowledge; there is only experience. Knowing the experience requires the ability to use language so that we can know each experience as the kind of experience it is. In the next chapter I will provide a more detailed discussion of how we know experiences by learning a language.

In the absence of a distinction between subject and object, experience is, as de Beauvoir puts it "abject." No-one, man or woman, is subject or object whilst we are in this abject state together. But, as de Beauvoir says, we often try to pretend that we are not abject. This, in fact, is part of Hegel's error: denying his own abjection and presuming that all men are subjects and that all women are not. Hegel's analysis is misguided and prejudicial.

v. de Beauvoir on the liberation of mothers

De Beauvoir indicates that there is something about losing ourselves to experience that is as important to humanity as developing our knowledge in the context of a history of ideas. Her use of the term "immanence" misleads

us towards a Hegelian vision of experience as immature knowledge. In Hegel's view, immanence is an immature version of knowing that develops towards transcendence just as a child is an immature version of a human who develops into an adult. I have argued above that de Beauvoir does not see immanence as an immature version of transcendence. Instead, her conception of immanence reveals that experience is not a way of knowing anything. I will now argue that de Beauvoir does not claim that motherhood restricts women to immanence.[15]

At a glance, it does appear that de Beauvoir claims that motherhood restricts woman to immanence. Recall passages such as "in maternity woman remained closely bound to her body, like an animal." (1953: 97) Note, however, that this statement follows Beauvoir's discussion of Hegel, and of other "men [who] have presumed to create a feminine domain - the kingdom of life, of immanence - only in order to lock up women therein." (1953: 97) De Beauvoir is not presenting her own view of maternity, or of immanence, but is showing us Hegel's ideas, albeit expressed in Sartre's terms, as an example of male theorists' views about these matters. It is therefore not clear that de Beauvoir subscribes to the vision of maternity that she presents in these passages.

De Beauvoir also argues that men value reason over the flesh and that a consequence of this valuation is the valuation of men over women due to the associations between men and reason, on the one hand, and women and embodiment on the other. There is no doubt that de Beauvoir values reason, for it is, she argues, only in virtue of reason that we can be free. The problem, as she sees it, is that "women have never set up female values in opposition

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[15] Lundren-Gothlin, for instance, holds this view. See her 1996:235-238.

to male values" and that this lack of values constructed by and for women leads to a devaluing of that which is considered to be feminine: nature, the flesh and immanence. (1953: 96) *The Second Sex* goes some way towards presenting a more positive conception of women as agents in their own right.

De Beauvoir draws from existential ethics to argue that women can be liberated. In existential ethics, according to de Beauvoir,

> [e]very subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; he achieves liberty only through a reaching out toward other liberties. (1953: 28)

In de Beauvoir's view, we must actively pursue freedom in our lives. Engaging in projects by choice is a stepping stone towards greater freedom. Engaging in these freely chosen projects confirms our transcendence; or our ability to make conscious choices about our lives. But, in de Beauvoir's words,

> what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she - a free and autonomous being like all human creatures - nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilise her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and for ever transcended by another ego *(conscience)* which is essential and sovereign. The drama of woman lies in this conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject (ego) - who always regards the self as the essential - and the compulsions of a situation in which she is the inessential. (1953: 29)

As de Beauvoir says, women *can* think and, as such, they are as free and autonomous as any other member of the human species. But the situation of women compels them into a position of subordination to men. Women are taken as the inessential, in her view, through men's association between maternity, the flesh and a passive indwelling consciousness. In pregnancy

women have little control of the development of the foetus, making that aspect of maternity an unconscious process. But, of course, pregnancy is only the beginning of mothering. The creation of a new life in utero apparently eclipses maternal autonomy in the more general sense because the creativity in utero is not active on the part of women. The assumption follows that all maternal authority is as natural as pregnancy. De Beauvoir does not agree that there is any such thing as natural knowledge in maternity.

De Beauvoir cites a number of cases of maternal indifference in an argument against maternal instinct. (1953: 522-526) She argues that the "word hardly applies, in any case, to the human species." Each situation must be assessed on its own merits, she says, claiming that different contexts give differing insights into the experiences of maternity. De Beauvoir's book sets out, in part, to show that maternity is not a necessary project for all women. But she also claims that we could have choices, and therefore freedom, if maternity was not pressed upon us. She argues that maternal experience need not be an impediment to reason.

In her view, then, epistemic authority is possible for women and men. Persons from either sex have the epistemic resources that enable them to pay attention to the facts and to make choices accordingly. Maternity does not effect the ability to reason. Maternity is only a constraint to reason, in de Beauvoir's view, when people take seriously the idea that maternal consciousness is more animal than human. But that very idea is a vital move in the subordination of women to men, in her vision, and liberation is possible through women's active participation in deciding whether they want to rear children and to create a society in which childbearing and childrearing are compossible with the sorts of projects men have valued as their own.

In her conclusion, for instance, de Beauvoir writes

> A world where men and women would be equal is easy to visualize, for that precisely is what the Soviet Revolution *promised*:...maternity was to be voluntary, which meant that contraception and abortion were to be authorized and that, on the other hand, all mothers and their children were to have exactly the same rights, in or out of marriage; pregnancy leaves were to be paid for by the State, which would assume charge of the children, signifying not that they would be *taken away* from their parents, but that they would not be *abandoned to* them. (1953: 734)

In other words, Beauvoir envisages a world - not unlike the one we inhabit 50 years on - where women are given freedom to make a range of choices about maternity. Women can choose whether or not to have a child; when to have a child; who to have a child with and so on. Thanks to feminists who have followed in de Beauvoir's footsteps, in both academic and grass roots organisations, we now have a greater range of contraception choices and of abortion providers.[16] De Beauvoir's vision is also one in which the State provides support for women with children, now evident in the form of childcare, family payments, family courts, counselling and emotional support centres, and so on. In a practical sense, then, de Beauvoir has helped us to prove that we are no less human and rational than men. Women, whether or not they are mothers, clearly do not have some peculiar childlike version of knowing. Women can make choices; and they can and do enter public life as mothers.

conclusion

I show that Hegel presents the indwelling consciousness as a version of immature knowledge. He claims that such consciousness is a purely

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[16] Clearly, the abortion debate rages on into the New Milennium. For a good discussion of feminist positions on the foetus, see Lyn Morgan and Meredith Michaels, 1999.

subjective way of knowing in which objects passively present themselves upon an inner screen. I have argued that his conception of experience as knowledge is untenable, however, because it is unlikely that anyone would know trees, for example, simply in virtue of being in the presence of trees. It is my view that knowing anything about experiences requires first learning a language according to the standards and practices of the conscious being's respective community. Hegel begins with experience as an immature type of knowing. I have presented an alternative view, that experiences are not a type of knowing but that they can be known after the fact if we turn our linguistically informed attention to them.

Moreover, I suggest here that Hegel's idea of an inner screen upon which all knowledge passively presents itself opens the way for scepticism about human experiences. The knowledge on an inner screen is deeply private and cannot be checked or authenticated. It is therefore possible that the conscious being is mistaken, and that they do not have any experiences. I will dwell on the problem of scepticism about experiences in Chapter two, where I also present a more detailed account of how we come to know experiences through learning language.

Simone de Beauvoir's vision of maternity as compatible with reason is made possible if she takes experience to be non-knowledge, as Bataille does, rather than as Hegelian immediate knowledge. I have drawn out passages in her text to support the claim that she characterises experience as non-knowledge: as "darkness" rather than as "light." I have shown that she attributes these states of immanent darkness to men in erotic experiences as much as she does to women in pregnancy. Finally I show that her account of maternity aims to liberate mothers from the shackles of domestic

subordination so that they can enter public life with facilities which enable mothers the freedom that Hegel argues is only possible for men.

In following chapters I will continue to investigate accounts of maternal experience which aim to improve our conception of the epistemic authority of mothers. It is my view that the Hegelian vision of experience as knowledge seeps into many contemporary feminist texts, through the work of theorists like Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jacques Lacan. In chapter two I show that Iris Young's account of *"Pregnant Embodiment"* inherits a private knowledge claim from Hegel through Merleau-Ponty. In chapters three and four I show how Lacan's work transmits private knowledge claims into our understanding of maternal experience and into Feminist Standpoint Epistemology. In chapter five I return to Bataille's revision of Hegel to put right a feminist generalisation about masculine knowledge based in sexual perversity. Even if Bataille's practices are perverse, we can learn from his conception of the distinction between experience and knowledge. This, I argue, is helpful for better understanding how to dismantle the Hegelian monolith in order to gain epistemic authority about experience.

In short, Hegel sets up the dichotomies in which women are associated with experience in opposition to male reason. In association with women and experience are the terms: nature, the body, inner experience, passive unconscious and private. In association with men and reason are the terms: culture, the mind, external world, active, conscious and public. These dichotomies fall neatly into line thanks to the Hegelian monolith. But this monolithic structure drains all epistemic authority from those who value experiences. Mothers, in particular, find themselves silenced and cast outside the properly human domain of creating reasons to live.

Appendix 1[17]

i Lloyd: Beauvoir's paradox

Geneveive Lloyd argues that de Beauvoir's account of two different sorts of consciousness - "immanence" and "transcendence" - are derived from Hegel by way of Sartre. Immanence, in this light, is the immature consciousness of passive sensory awareness. The word means indwelling, indicating that the immanent consciousness is directed inwards, experiencing whatever is taking place inside itself. Transcendence is outward directed and, in Sartrean terms indicates the "Subject" who looks rather than the "Other" who is looked at. Women are cast as the "Other" in Lloyd's analysis of de Beauvoir's interpretation of Hegel. Women are "Other" on this view so long as they are engaged in the natural activities of childbearing. Lloyd argues that de Beauvoir's view of transcendence makes women powerless subordinates if they succumb to maternal duties.

As Lloyd says, de Beauvoir argues that women are positioned as "Other" by men. Being inward focussed in maternity, for instance, women are not looking at others, but being looked at. Men, on the other hand, are actively looking around themselves at each other. The outward focus of men, she argues, makes men subjects in their own right, enabling them to have a sort of autonomous freedom which is impossible for those who are

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[17]Appendix 1 is taken from an earlier draft of this chapter. It is included because the author was still undecided about whether to include it in the final version. Section ii, on Hegelian self-certainty, repeats material which is in the body of the text, but is included here to indicate the original flow of argument, and because it throws light on the discussion in the main text. -eds.

not engaged in the business of looking at others. For, in Lloyd's reading of de Beauvoir, freedom is only possible between subjects; in inter subjectivity.

Women, on this reading, are too busily focussed on keeping the species going to be engaged in the struggle for freedom. They allegedly accept their subordinate positions, maintaining the spheres of life and death, whilst their men engage in the public arena of rational accomplishments. The two sexes are thus opposed with women tending to the more basic personal domestic needs while men keep the social sphere running smoothly. But Hegel's specific claims about women's consciousness are sketchy. Lloyd directs us to his view in *The Philosophy of Right* that the State would be in jeopardy if women were in control. (1983: 84) She cites his view that women have well developed intuition and a "'vague unity of feeling,' rather than a grasp of universality." (1983: 84) As I will show later, Hegel claims that women *have* consciousness which is universal as a type of consciousness, but that women cannot *grasp* universals. So, as Lloyd argues, Hegel reserves the clear light of reason for men who, he claims, are rightly placed in the socio-political sphere of human life. According to Hegel, women stay at home as dutiful wives and mothers.

Lloyd argues that the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, presented in his account of self-consciousness, is important for understanding de Beauvoir's claim that women can transcend their roles as wives and mothers. As Lloyd says, de Beauvoir argues that women can rise above their immanence But, in Lloyd's view, "only at the expense of alienation from their bodily being." (1983: 101) She thus suggests that women's freedom is only possible if they give up maternity.

Lloyd asserts that

> In Hegel's original version of the transcendence of life, women were outside the drama, relegated to a nether world. In de Beauvoir's application of the model, mediated through Sartre, women are fitted into the conflict of hostile consciousnesses; her ideal is that they struggle to become lookers, rather than always looked-at. (1983: 101-102)

As we discover below, in Hegel's view, becoming conscious of oneself as a particular consciousness requires first noticing that others are conscious. As Lloyd argues, Hegelian self-consciousness is produced through inter subjectivity. Initially, consciousness reaches out to the other and tries to make it part of itself. But, upon recognising another's consciousness, the conscious being sees its own consciousness mirrored back. This recognition of another being's consciousness, and the subsequent recognition of its own self-consciousness, enables the merely conscious being of to move into the second dialectical phase of conscious development. Hegel's three phases begin with consciousness. The second phase is self-consciousness; and the final phase is reason. Moving beyond consciousness requires the initial recognition of self-certainty and develops into reason through an ongoing confrontation with other self-conscious beings.

Lloyd claims that the Sartrean distinction between the looker and the looked-at is derived from the Hegelian struggle between conscious beings for recognition. She argues that the Sartrean vision is liberating for those who take the viewing position, and for those who create themselves as someone worth recognising. But, Lloyd complains, Sartre envisages some bodies as "bound to a body immersed in life," constraining them to immanence rather than transcendence. She argues that this reading of immanence and transcendence confines mothers to the subordinate position of the Other at whom men gaze.

Lloyd proposes that de Beauvoir's reading of Hegel excludes a middle ground between immanence and transcendence. She claims that Hegel places women in this middle zone "located between the merely 'natural' and full participation in the outer world of projects and exploits." (1983: 98) De Beauvoir's reading, she claims, makes possible the movement from one side of the dichotomy to the other without recourse to the middle term. Lloyd claims that de Beauvoir is wrong to think women *can* share the mature consciousness Hegel attributes only to men. In Lloyd's reading of Hegel, transcendence requires suppression of the 'feminine' consciousness associated with the term "immanence." But, unlike de Beauvoir, Lloyd conceives of Hegel's feminine consciousness as wedged into the middle zone, as capable of attaining self-certainty. De Beauvoir, on the other hand, argues that women can be both immanent and transcendent, omitting any discussion of the middle ground to which Lloyd refers.

Women have *self-consciousness*, or "self-certainty" in Lloyd's view. It is worth pointing out that Hegel's treatment of the master-slave dialectic takes place in this middle ground. The master-slave dialectic is crucial in Lloyd's reading of Beauvoir to show why women are positioned as "Other" in de Beauvoir's work. Self-certainty is more advanced than immanent sense-certainty but, Lloyd argues, women cannot progress beyond this middling stage to join with men in *reason*. Self-certainty gives women the most basic sort of *self-consciousness* which, in the Hegelian picture is the middle ground between experiential *consciousness* and *reason*. It is my view, however, that women do not even get as far as this middle ground in Hegel's work.

In Lloyd's understanding, according to which Hegel takes women to move beyond sense-certainty into self-certainty, Hegel does not conceive of women as immanent. The middle zone to which Lloyd refers takes women beyond the domain of universal consciousness to develop self-consciousness as particular individuals. But, as I argue in the main text of this chapter, Hegel's claims about women's roles in the ethical order denies them the particularity he associates with men. I am therefore more inclined to agree with de Beauvoir that Hegel does conceive of women as immanent.

The universal consciousness is grounded in experience in Hegel's view, in contrast to the particular consciousness who develops abstract thought. Whereas men's conscious development enables them to know themselves as particular individuals, in Hegel's view, women's consciousness denies this possibility. Women's consciousness is universal because the consciousness of any particular woman will be similar to that of any other. In Hegel's view women simply register in consciousness whatever lies before their senses. Having only universal consciousness, women are more like thermometers which read off their environment than self-conscious human beings.

Lloyd argues that de Beauvoir's idea of immanence and transcendence is based on a misunderstanding of the Hegelian dialectic. Hegelian transcendence is a progressive development away from immanence. There is a series of stages whereby each supersedes the next in a constant stream of coming to know. But, as Lloyd says, each previous stage remains intact. For men, the realm of "merely natural feelings" is transcended in such a way that they come to understand their own individual particularity. For mothers, on the other hand, the realm of feeling is not

transcended: "there is no such realm which she can both leave and leave intact." (1983: 102) Lloyd correctly indicates that maternal experience makes impossible the transcendence of embodiment if we are to agree with the Hegelian process.

As Lloyd argues, Hegel's version of conscious development requires that experiences are repressed to make way for rational knowledge. She claims that his association between women and experience is constitutive of our understanding of femininity. "What has happened has been not a simple exclusion of women, but a constitution of femininity through that exclusion." (1983: 106) Femininity is constructed through an understanding of experience as an immature version of reason. Femininity is excluded from the public domain, however, because experience is deeply subjective. As a sort of knowledge, then, experience is not granted the same degree of value accorded to abstract reason precisely because the latter can be checked and verified. In Hegel's vision women's lives are immersed in experiences. He is unable to see that experiences of life and death are compossible with reason. Seeing that women's experiences are valuable to life in general, Hegel associates femininity with the sort of experiential knowledge which, for males, must be negated and sublated, or suppressed so that inter subjectivity is possible. In Hegel's view, freedom requires inter subjectivity through the development of reason.

According to Simone de Beauvoir, women only need to develop reason so that they have the inter subjectivity required for freedom. But, as Lloyd argues, Hegel says that developing inter subjective reason is only possible through the suppression of experience. De Beauvoir's use of the terms "immanence" and "transcendence" indicate this Hegelian vision, whereby

one starts out in a conscious state that is indwelling and rises above that state towards reason. To argue that one can both have indwelling knowledge and abstract knowledge is paradoxical, however, because the former is an immature version of the latter. De Beauvoir's view is either paradoxical or she has a different conception of the terms "immanence" and "transcendence."

Lloyd argues correctly that a Hegelian vision of transcendence represents the male idealisation of reason: as knowledge that no longer depends on having sensations. Lloyd says that this notion of transcendence "feeds on the exclusion of the feminine" in theories like Hegel's, which places women outside the rational domain. The feminine, is contextualised as "greater biological involvement in 'species life'." (1983: 100) Women's ethical responsibilities to keep life going, she says, are "relegated to a nether world" by Hegel. (1983: 101) Lloyd thus claims that de Beauvoir's call for female transcendence is paradoxical precisely because this entails rising above their own biological constitution.

Lloyd's reading of de Beauvoir suggests that maternal experience gets in the way of Hegelian transcendence. This would be the case if de Beauvoir were being faithful to Hegel, or even to Sartre. Indeed, feminists such as Catriona MacKenzie (1986) and Eva Lundgren-Gothlin (1996) agree with Lloyd's drawing out the paradox of her claims that women can both bear children and enter public life. To do both suggests the paradox of both rising above and not rising above the sort of knowledge Hegel argues is given in embodied experience.

It is my view that de Beauvoir challenges Hegel's vision of sexual difference by showing that he is wrong about experience. Rather than suggesting that women give up maternity to overcome their immanence,

she establishes that inner experience is not knowledge. She argues that, as a kind of non-knowledge, immanence is as apparent in male erotic experience as it is in female experience.

I will show that de Beauvoir's conception of erotic experience is more like that of Georges Bataille (1988) than Hegel's. Bataille does not conceive of inner experience as immature knowledge, seeing it instead as being outside knowledge. Placing experience outside knowledge, as non-knowledge is significant because it changes the status of experience from being an immature sort of knowing to something that can be known. Before returning to de Beauvoir and Bataille (see main text -ed), I shall examine Hegel's version of experience as a type of universal knowledge.

ii Hegelian Sense-certainty

Hegelian *sense-certainty* is immediate knowledge of the world as distinct from knowledge of the self *as a self* in relation to the world. Hegel's "middle zone," between *consciousness* and *reason*, is the stage in which we come to know ourselves as selves, and to peer into our own consciousness, rather than into the world, to see what is going on. But in *sense-certainty* we have no such opportunity to see into our own minds. Sense-certainty is first person knowledge *if* it is knowledge at all, and there are times when Hegel says it is. Taking sense-certainty to be the undeveloped first person knowledge indicates that the conscious being knows whatever is presented to her consciousness *as the kind of thing that it is*. The problem with first person knowledge is that it is immature because it does not meet the inter subjectivity requirements so that such knowledge can be authenticated.

Sense-certainty just happens, without any active participation on behalf of the conscious being who simply experiences whatever presents itself to

awareness. Hegel's discussion of sense-certainty is best understood if we imagine that the awareness is played out on a kind of inner screen, with a succession of impressions each vanishing into the next. There is no distinction between the succession of impressions and the conscious being. It is as though the conscious being just is the screen, reflecting the world within a mind that can not yet distinguish itself as a mind. In Hegel's view, the conscious being only knows a succession of physical objects in sense-certainty. There is no attempt to grasp the objects notionally, or to have a linguistic comprehension of an object in relation to anything else. There is no awareness of the object's parts or qualities. Instead, there is only awareness that there is an object, giving certainty of that object's existence. The object is sensed and its existence is confirmed because, in Hegel's view, the sensation is the most primordial way of knowing anything. (§90-91)

According to Hegel, there is a vague recognition of the self in sense-certainty, but only in so far as the object is in awareness. The self awareness just is awareness of the object in consciousness. The conscious being merely reads off the environment registering various sensations in consciousness. The registering of sensations requires that there is consciousness, since for Hegel the 'I' is nothing more than the knowing. Neither the self nor the object are defined; they are merely registered to form the structure of consciousness. (§92) . In Hegel's view, then, the fact that there is a consciousness with which to register the world is sufficient to claim that there is some sort of knowing taking place. Sense-certainty is immediate knowledge.

It is important to recognise that this immediate knowledge can be understood in two different ways. Immediate could mean *non-inferential*, taking basic utterances, such as "this" to indicate that the conscious being has

a very undeveloped vocabulary at this early stage. With non-inferential utterances, the immature conscious being comes to know that there are things around her, even though she does not yet know these things as the kinds of things they are. The epistemic status of this sort of knowledge will be dubious, however, because it is not yet clear how standards and practices of the community will impact on knowledge. The relevance of such standards and practices to anything which can properly said to be *knowledge* is discussed below.

The second way to understand what Hegel means by immediate knowledge is to say that the knowledge is *given* by sensations. If this is so, we cannot be sure that we each have the same kinds of sensations, let alone whether anyone else does. There is no way to check other peoples sensations directly whereas others can check whether they are behaving in the expected way associated with the sensations they claim to have. Others have more authoritative knowledge about the correlation between behaviour with different kinds of sensations, or with feelings, than the conscious being with sense-certainty.

For example, someone might point at a sore tooth but is not guaranteed *epistemic* authority *just* by pointing or even by uttering "this." Such authority does not carry epistemic status. The dentist who looks at the tooth and makes some prognosis will have the epistemic authority. If the pregnant woman claims to have anything like *sense-certainty,* this will not grant her epistemic authority in relation to medical knowledge, as I shall argue in chapter two. The problem with this kind of knowledge is that it is deeply private and cannot be checked *as knowledge* by anyone other than ourselves.

Sense-certainty is a passive way of knowing. The sensations just register anything that is present and the conscious being only knows that which lies

within the sensory field. Even though the conscious being tries to get a better grasp of things, sense-certainty is unable to sustain anything in consciousness because of its fleeting nature. The conscious being is unable to control its knowledge in sense-certainty, being simply a passive recipient of information from its immediate environment.

Hegel postulates that each sensation is superseded by the next and the conscious being can do little more than use the demonstrative term "This." But the term "This" does not help others understand that which Hegel claims is the truth of sense-certainty. Sense-certainty is a purely subjective way of knowing which is not at once inter subjective. For, in Hegel's view, the true meaning of sense-certainty is an inner episode which is deeply private and sensuous. He says "it is just not possible for us to ever say, or express in words, a sensuous being that we *mean*." (§97) Sense-certainty therefore fails to meet the inter subjectivity requirement by which others may agree that the conscious being's knowledge is true or false. No-one else has access to the conscious being's knowledge in Sense-certainty so that knowledge can be checked and verified. Sense-certainty is thus open to scepticism.[18]

To avoid the sceptical view that different beings sense the same things differently, Hegel claims that the *meaning* of sense-certainty is "universal" rather than particular: each conscious being has the same types of sensations when faced with the same sorts of objects. (§102) If we are facing a tree, for instance, we each see the same thing; if we are facing a house, we also see the same thing; and so on. Hegel's account of sense-certainty discusses images rather than other sorts of experiences, but it follows that we will all smell the

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[18] I present a detailed analysis of the scepticism of knowledge about sensations in Chapter two.

same thing when sniffing a rose, or feel the same thing when cut by a knife. The basic idea is the registration of sensory information in consciousness, and being able to identify each distinct sensation as "This." In Hegel's view, the knowledge is given by the sensation and is universally held by all conscious beings with the same sensory apparatus. The universal nature of sense-certainty is important, in his view, because these beings cannot say what they mean; or express their knowledge about sensations.

Space and Time play an important role in sense-certainty to ensure the succession of sensations so that each 'Here' and 'Now,' vanishes into the next, making it impossible to focus on anything. There is constant flux, or change in sense-certainty. (§94) There may be a tree presenting itself to consciousness, for instance, as 'This' tree which is 'Here.' But, turning around, there is no longer a tree. The tree is negated by the house which is 'here.' But, he says, the 'here' is constant and the objects inconstant. Each awareness of 'here' and 'now' is replaced by the next, being different from the last and therefore a negation. Day is negated by night and the tree is negated by a house, and so on. (§98-99) That which remains, according to Hegel, is *"pure being."*

Pure being is consciousness itself. But, for Hegel, having consciousness is sufficient for knowing the objects which are presented to consciousness. As Hegel describes it, immediate knowledge is the constant stream of negation and mediation in space and time of things presenting themselves to consciousness. The negation is brought about by the fact that the tree is replaced by a house, which is not-tree. The replacement of a tree by a house is possible only because the conscious being is situated in space and time. Time enables the consciousness to move so that the house is a negative in relation to a tree. Each awareness of 'here' and 'now' is replaced by the next, being

different from the last and therefore a negation. Each successive image or sensation in inner space negates the last in a perpetual movement of supersession.

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, Hegel's discussion of sense-certainty as a flowing stream of consciousness indicates that there is a projection of images and impressions on an inner screen. But Hegel claims that no-one is present to make anything of the sounds, images (and other senses) as they are projected into inner space. There is no self-consciousness during sense-certainty, he argues. There are only objects in the absence of a subject. For, in Hegel's view, the object is the passive component of consciousness and the subject is the active component of consciousness. The conscious being of Sense-certainty is not yet a subject. If she is aware of herself at all, the conscious being of sense-certainty is aware of herself only as a fleeting succession of inner objects.

Moreover, the knowledge a conscious being has in sense-certainty cannot be authenticated. Her knowledge is private precisely because the conscious being is unable to show anyone else her screen, and it is on the screen that Hegel claims the meaning of her knowledge is to be discovered. All these sensory images, sounds or otherwise have in common is that they are present on the inner screen in a succession of ever-changing heres and nows. Hegel's conception of sense-certainty is therefore immanent if we understand the term to mean indwelling. I will now examine some of de Beauvoir's claims about immanence to show that she refers to the inner experiences Hegel places under the category sense-certainty.

iii de Beauvoir and maternal immanence

In her Introduction to *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir claims that women are free and autonomous beings, like men. Women's freedom is constrained, in her view, by the views of men who see maternity as being more animal than human. The problem with maternity is that women do not have to consciously control their reproductive abilities. Maternal consciousness is passive in this sense and is thus opposed to the active consciousness with which humans are associated. The properly human consciousness, she suggests, is not determined by nature. But maternity, on the other hand, is purely natural. (1953: 28-29)

As Lloyd argues, de Beauvoir sees that women are defined as Other, rather than as free autonomous agents, or subjects in their own right. She characterises maternity as "a degradation of existence into the *'en-soi'* - the brutish life of subjection to given conditions." (1953: 29) The *"en-soi'"* is the French translation of "in-itself" which Hegel uses to describe the consciousness of sense-certainty. "Being-in-itself" is not yet self-conscious in contradistinction to "being-for-itself" which is self-conscious. There is no self-certainty in the earlier stages of consciousness described above, so it is apparent that de Beauvoir associates maternal experience with the "in-itself" of Hegelian consciousness in which there is no subject. Lloyd argues that Hegel does regard women as spiritual subjects, and sees de Beauvoir "illuminating an inner tension in Hegel's position." (1983: 98) Women's subjectivity is less advanced than men's, but is nonetheless ethical. To have an ethical duty requires that one be a subject, in Lloyd's view, even though women's participation in the higher levels of spirit is vicarious.

On de Beauvoir's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology* women lack freedom because they do not reach self-consciousness: they are looked-at rather than

lookers. As de Beauvoir makes clear, freedom is only possible in *inter subjectivity*. Hegel's version of sense-certainty makes experience purely subjective and private, so does not meet the inter subjectivity requirement necessary for freedom. Lloyd claims that de Beauvoir's idea of freedom through self-hood is "quite uncompromising. Nothing short of actual engagement in 'projects' and 'exploits' will do. In the lack of that, human subjects are forced back into mere immanence." (1983: 98)

De Beauvoir disputes Hegel's claim that women do not have self-consciousness. She argues that women are taught how to be subordinate to men from childhood. Women learn that they will be wives and mothers - to look after men and their children who they must put before their own interests. De Beauvoir does not accept that it is impossible for women to become self-conscious, but sees a certain blindness of women to their own predicament preventing freedom from subordination. Most decisively she sees theories like Hegel's as associating women's maternal function more with animals than with rational humans. In de Beauvoir's words:

The female, to a greater extent than the male, is the prey of the species; and the human race has always sought to escape its specific destiny. The support of life became for man an activity and a project through the invention of the tool; but in maternity woman remained closely bound to her body, like an animal. It is because humanity calls itself in question in the matter of living - that is to say, values the reasons for living above mere life - that, confronting woman, man assumes mastery (1953: 97).

Now, de Beauvoir clearly implies that women's reproductive function impedes the possibility of becoming human. Passages like this support views like Lloyd's, suggesting de Beauvoir presents a negative account of female embodiment. Humanity is, for de Beauvoir; a matter of acting; of reasoning;

of calling things into question; of having values. Mothers, on the other hand, are more like animals roaming the primordial swamp of mere life.

But, the views expressed here by de Beauvoir are not so much her own as those of Hegel. In the context of her discussion of Hegel, de Beauvoir says:

Men have presumed to create a feminine domain - the kingdom of life, of immanence - only in order to lock up women therein. (1953: 96-7)

She sees Hegel constructing femininity as "the kingdom of life," in association with sense-certainty. Quite rightly, however, de Beauvoir disagrees that the female body necessarily ties women to an animal-like existence. De Beauvoir argues that women can and do attain independent consciousness and want to liberate themselves from the animal-like status attributed to them by men. She claims that Hegel bestows the animal type of life upon women because he does not take into account the fact that women recognise and aspire to the same values as men. In so doing, she says, Hegel creates two domains: one of masculinity and one of femininity. The former domain, masculinity, presumes to have mastery over the other because of the ability to call into question life itself. Calling life into question is, as de Beauvoir indicates, a matter of reason, or of self-consciousness. Femininity, according to de Beauvoir, is constructed as the domain of immanence, or sense-certainty. (1953: 96-97)

Nevertheless, de Beauvoir's account of maternal immanence is ambiguous. In her Introduction, de Beauvoir claims that maternity causes women to fall back from transcendence into immanence. (1953: 29) This is the point with which Lloyd disagrees because in Hegelian terms one cannot go back to sense-certainty once one has self-consciousness. In Hegel's view, sense-certainty is knowledge through sensations alone and the development

of self-consciousness preserves the sensual component of experience by binding it to a more advanced concept. Those who become self-conscious move out of the domain of this purely private subjective sort of knowing and into the community of knowers. Hegel's dialectical movement beyond the universally held sense experiences enables the subject to have authentic knowledge because, unlike the private knowledge of sense-certainty, the self-conscious being has knowledge which is inter subjective. Being subject to authentication by others is thus an important part of the maturation of knowledge in Hegel's vision.

The question posed by Lloyd, then, is how women can fall back into immanence if they have developed self-consciousness. Importantly, Lloyd argues that Hegel gives women some self-consciousness insofar as he claims that women are "ethical." But, as I will show later, this contradicts his claim in the *Ethical Order* that women are not particular individuals, having only the universal consciousness. I have shown above that Hegel conceives of the universal consciousness as sense-certainty. But I have also made clear that Hegel conceives of sense-certainty as a sort of deeply subjective knowing, in which things simply present themselves to consciousness. Moreover, it is clear that Hegel allows that the conscious being has knowledge of the things presented, like trees and houses, as the kinds of things that they are. To fall back into sense-certainty from self-consciousness would thus entail unlearning that one is a distinct individual in relation to the world and becoming fixated on the inner screen. The point is that once the sensations are discerned as being those of a self who is distinct from the objects they represent, it is impossible to just represent objects without also being aware of the self as representing these.

Like Lloyd, de Beauvoir recognises that women have self-consciousness. Women are aware of themselves as distinct from the objects they represent to themselves. The contention, I think, arises out of Lloyd's generosity to Hegel, on one hand, and a general ambiguity in de Beauvoir's use of the term "immanence" on the other. I say that Lloyd is generous in her reading of Hegel because she argues that women reach the middle zone of self-consciousness. To be sure, the master-slave dialectic of this section of the *Phenomenology* does shed light upon the mechanism of domination and subordination. But I think this struggle is also read as the mediating struggle of an individual consciousness who must suppress his own experience in the pursuit of reason.[19] Most significantly, though, I take it that Lloyd sees self-consciousness as going hand in hand with using language. Even Hegel must acknowledge that women can speak so it does not make sense that he gives women anything less than self-consciousness if that is necessary for using language. As I show in the following section, however, Hegel brings language in to the story of consciousness, in his articulation of perception and understanding. I will return to de Beauvoir's ambiguous use of the term "immanence" in section five. (ie section 4 in main text - ed) ...

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[19] I have more to say about this in later chapters. In chapter three this struggle is reiterated in Lacan's version of the Oedipus complex, for instance, in which all experiences must be repressed to make way for speech.

Chapter Two

Iris Young and Zola the pregnant zombie

Iris Marion Young breaks the silence about what it is like to be pregnant in her attempt to understand what is unique about the experience of pregnancy (Young 1984). Her first person phenomenological account of pregnancy aims to show that first person descriptions of pregnancy have the status of authentic knowledge. She says that Cartesian metaphysics informs medical discourses which produce a mechanistic view of pregnancy. Young says that the mechanistic view is so influential over Western conceptions of pregnancy that the pregnant woman often views her own body as a container for a foetus: the body is thus understood as a baby producing machine which is distinct from and opposed to the thoughts and feelings of the pregnant woman; and over which the pregnant woman does not have any control or authority.

Young turns to Maurice Merleau-Ponty and existential phenomenology for an alternative account of pregnant embodiment. But Young is not entirely faithful to Merleau-Ponty who maintains that authority depends upon an "abstract unifying consciousness." Young takes Kristeva's psychoanalytical account of the divided subject to support her own view that the sense of self is bi-located: in the abstract consciousness *and* in the torso. With a bi-located subjectivity, Young argues that the pregnant woman has two different sorts of knowledge: objective, public knowledge is produced in the unifying consciousness whereas subjective and private knowledge is produced in the torso. Young says the pregnant woman's phenomenological access to her foetus gives her private knowledge that is incommunicable. (1984: 57)

Whilst I agree with much of what Young says about pregnancy, there is nevertheless an important problem arising from her claim that the pregnant woman has a unique knowledge in pregnancy. The problem arises from the claim that experiences are *private knowledge.* Young's commitment to private knowledge shows that she is a neo-Cartesian in the company of thinkers like Frank Jackson. I will show that this form of neo-Cartesianism has absurd consequences; it commits its holders to the possibility of zombies; or worse, pregnant zombies. But I then introduce Wilfrid Sellars' argument about the causal necessity of experiences for knowing anything as a better alternative for characterising the experiences of pregnancy.

i. Young's phenomenological account of the self - world distinction

Iris Marion Young is interested in defending the epistemic authority of the pregnant woman about states of her own body. She claims to do this by overcoming Cartesian mind-body dualism and offering an alternative phenomenological description of pregnancy in which body-world, and self-foetus distinctions break down. Young argues that the pregnant woman is alienated from her own experiences by Western medicine, identifying as a self who is distinct from her embodied condition. She argues that Cartesian metaphysics informs the Western medical approach to pregnancy and birthing, so that the woman's body is viewed like a foetal container or humidicrib which is out of the woman's control. Her point is that the self, or subject of Cartesian metaphysics is non-physical and is distinct from the physical body.

Young takes Maurice Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology as an alternative metaphysics that does not buy into the Cartesian mind-body

distinction. She says existential phenomenology situates consciousness and subjectivity in the lived body. Her aim is to show that the pregnant woman experiences herself as spatially located in the body rather than being located in the mind and associated with disembodied spirit. Young describes pregnancy in terms of embodied consciousness. Her notion of embodied consciousness is fleshed out as having embodied, rather than strictly mental experiences.

Young presents a brief survey of existential phenomenology as the key to locating subjectivity in the body rather than the mind. She argues that Merleau-Ponty and others upset the Cartesian exclusivity between categories like "subject and object, inner and outer, I and world." (47) She claims that these are false distinctions because all experience originates in the flesh.[20] Young takes the existential phenomenological view that perceptual awareness entails that the body is a complex sensory apparatus. Young says that Merleau-Ponty "locates the 'intentional arc' that unifies experience in the body rather than in an abstract constituting consciousness." (47) The "intentional arc" refers to perception. The "abstract constituting consciousness" is another term for linguistic thought. Experience is unified in the intentional arc because the subject's awareness of the perception counts as a sort of knowing in which the subject and object are indistinct. The perception is not yet a content of linguistic thought, being instead a sort of pre-linguistic self-awareness. Perceptual awareness bridges the division between flesh and conscious thought precisely because having the feel entails

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[20] Her argument stands in the following quote from Straus: "The meaning of 'mine' is determined in relation to, in contraposition to, the world, the All, to which I am nevertheless a party. The meaning of 'mine' is not comprehensible in the unmediated antithesis of I and non-I, own and strange, subject and object, constituting I and constituted world. Everything points to the fact that separateness and union originate in the same ground." (Cited in Young 1984: 47)

having a body. It would be impossible to feel anything without the complex perceptual apparatus of the body.

But according to Young the dichotomous terms, subject and object, are retained by existential phenomenologists because they are thought to be necessary for language. Young complains that the "dualist language" employed by existential phenomenologists maintains an implicit divide between self and world. The implicit distinction renders the body an object in relation to thought. The thinking subject thinks about her body as an object because there is a distinction between the awareness of oneself as thinking and that which is being thought about. Thinking about her own body in language therefore leaves the pregnant woman divided between a non-physical self and the physical body, or world. Therefore the body is an object so long as we think about it in language.

Young motivates the distinction between perception and linguistic thought through her claim that she has privileged access to her inner perceptions of pregnancy, not unlike the access she has to her thoughts and dreams. She says she can tell others about these phenomena but that they are not objects to herself and her audience in the same way. (48) Young thus characterises a distinction between perception and language; or between having an experience and telling others about it. She argues that the experiences of pregnancy can be understood in terms of Merleau-Ponty's version of pre-linguistic self awareness. But Young is critical of Merleau-Ponty's "idea of a unified self as a condition of experience." She claims that the idea of a unitary self presupposes that the speaking subject rules supreme over the embodied self. Young disagrees that any singular linguistic thought

is sufficient to "achieve the unity of all [her] thoughts." (p. 48)[21] In her view, linguistic thoughts are complemented with experiences. Young therefore dismisses Merleau-Ponty's idea that the self needs to think of him or herself as a unity, and becomes a unity only by thinking.

She suggests that Kristeva's vision of a *split* subject is a better alternative for characterising pregnancy. But instead of reviewing Kristeva's psychoanalytic account of the divided subject, Young presents her own vision of pregnant embodiment. Her phenomenological description of pregnancy demonstrates that the pregnant woman is always both feeling and thinking. Young describes the paradoxical experiences of the pregnant body. The pregnant woman's body becomes unfamiliar to her: her nipples change colour; her belly "swells into a pear;" she feels tickles and gurgles "belonging to another, another that is nevertheless my body." (48) She says that the paradox emerges when commonplace distinctions between self and other blur when she contemplates the experiences of her pregnant body. The body is the self, in Young's view, but it is also not self. The self world distinction dissolves because another body, the foetus, *feels* like an extension of her own body even though she *knows* it is only temporarily so. Young argues that pregnancy is unique because there is no clear distinction between self and other. It is not clear that Young adequately addresses the mind-world divide in her claim that the body both feels and thinks. Instead of explaining how the felt consciousness of a body is reconciled with the thoughts one has about

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[21] Again, she presents a quote to let Merleau-Ponty speak for himself. Here is some of her citation:

that body, Young describes pregnancy as paradigm of being a self "not in the mode of being myself." She refers to the experiences of her body as it changes to accommodate another.

She says, for instance:

> Pregnancy challenges the integration of my body experience by rendering fluid the boundary between what is within, myself, and what is outside, separate. I experience my insides as the space of another, yet my own body (49).

According to Young, the experience of pregnancy is radically different from other embodied experiences. We usually associate inner experiences with the self and not other because others are usually part of the external world. But this is not the case for the pregnant woman because her awareness of the foetus is a type of self-awareness in the same way that the awareness of heartbeat is a self-awareness. Importantly, however, the awareness of the foetus is also the awareness of someone else - at least potentially. To be sure, the foetus is not an independent being so long as it is a foetus, but it is often thought about in terms of what it will be after it is born. Thinking about the foetus as a foetus nevertheless requires thinking in language so this is not the sort of awareness with which we are most concerned here. So long as the pregnant woman is aware of the sensations produced by the foetus moving inside her, she is aware of sensations of self, not other. Therefore, experiencing her foetus gives the pregnant woman self-awareness even if she also thinks about her foetus as part of the world. According to Young, this is evidence that the distinction between self and world collapsed during pregnancy.

There must be, then, corresponding to this open unity of the world, an open and indefinite unity of subjectivity...it is through one present thought that I achieve the unity of all my thoughts.

Nevertheless, the pregnant woman's awareness of her foetus is not unlike awareness of her heartbeat, or of wind in her intestines; each being a felt awareness of her inner states. The self-world distinction collapses in all cases of inner awareness, making our self-awareness of embodied states a similar type of awareness to the pregnant woman's awareness of her foetus. Even so, we do not question whether our inner sensations of heart-beats constitute an awareness of ourselves. The difference between sensations of heart-beats and sensations of foetal movements is the knowledge that, unlike the heart beat, the foetus is "other." Unlike the heart, or any other part of the human body for that matter[22], the foetus will become an individual human being. But, it is not *yet* an individual human. The foetus is a temporary part of the pregnant woman's self that will later be in the world. Acknowledging that the pregnant woman's awareness of her foetus is a type of self-awareness is important in debates about rights of the foetus, for instance. The pregnant woman experiences the foetus as an extension of her own body. Moreover, the pregnant woman experiences her body as primarily self, not as other.

It is worth noting that Young's idea of a split subject could be interpreted as claiming that there are two centres of consciousness. This brings to mind the idea of conjoined twins. Conjoined twins have two centres of consciousness with some shared bodily parts. Each consciousness experiences the sensations of the same heart beat, for instance, or of the same lungs inflating, or even of

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[22] Here I acknowledge that genetic engineering and "cloning" techniques may enable reproduction via DNA, but I doubt that many people think about any part of their body as a potential "other life". I do not think organ transplants constitute the same awareness as foetal awareness because, although they may give another person life, the organs do not constitute an other life in and of themselves.

the same stomach rumbling. Each twin knows what it is like to share these body parts in a way that is not like the sharing of a body by the pregnant woman and her foetus. In the case of the twins we imagine different consciousnesses, or subjects, within a shared body. This is not Young's idea of a divided subject. Her vision is more accurately described as the pregnant woman having two types of consciousness: embodied awareness and rational thought. Young makes no claims about foetal consciousness.

The pregnant woman's consciousness is divided between the "eyes" and torso. From the eyes, she sees her body as part of the world, in which case she is a subject thinking about her body. From the torso, she has a private unmediated awareness of her body, as distinct from her awareness of the world beyond. Young describes what it is like to feel weight and movement from within her torso but claims that such awareness is complementary to her awareness of goings on in the world around her. Moreover, she argues that the two complementary types of awareness give rise to two different sorts of knowledge. Young says she can share the first sort of knowledge, in which self and world are distinct as thinker and content of thought; but she cannot share the second mode of consciousness because the above mentioned distinction collapses in the experience. In Young's view, then, the pregnant woman is divided as a thinking subject between two radically different sorts of thoughts: abstract thoughts that she can share; and embodied experience that counts as private knowledge.

Nevertheless, Young uncritically accepts the Cartesian view of the privacy of an inner world. The inner phenomena are associated with a deeply private centre of consciousness whilst the visible phenomena are associated with communicable thought; "comprehending, observing, willing and acting." (1984: 51) Descartes does not dispute the existence of a deeply private centre of

consciousness; that being the thinking subject who has not yet interpreted data from the world beyond himself. In Descartes' vision we have perceptions and judgments, with only the latter being properly articulated. He claims that his knowledge of the former is "imperfect and confused." In his contemplation of the wax, Descartes says:

> But what is the piece of wax that can be perceived only by the [understanding of] mind? It is certainly the same which I see, touch, imagine; and, in fine, it is the same which, from the beginning, I believed it to be. But (and this it is of moment to observe) the perception of it is neither an act of sight, of touch, nor of imagination, and never was either of these, though it might formerly seem so, but is simply an intuition (*inspectio*) of the mind, which may be imperfect and confused, as it formerly was, or very clear and distinct, as it is at present, according as the attention is more or less directed to the elements which it contains, and of which it is composed. (1984: 92)

Descartes argues the perception of the wax is an act of the mind, not of the body. In his view, perception is a type of awareness, making perception a non-physical rather than physical event. The wax he is observing is like the body, on the other hand, inasmuch as each are extended in space. In Descartes view, things that are extended in space are publicly observable in contradistinction to the perception of these things. Perception, he argues, is non-physical because it is not extended in space. Moreover, the fact that perceptual experiences are not extended in space makes them unobservable to all but the person who has them. For Descartes, then, perception is a private, first person event of a self in opposition to the world.

Young says that the pregnant woman has private sensations in her body, and that she knows these sensations immediately. But this does not show that the self-world distinction collapses; it reinforces that distinction. The distinction remains between a private, unmediated awareness of inner

experience and a publicly mediated awareness of the external world. The awareness is private giving her privileged access and thus authority about what goes on in her body. The sort of epistemic authority for which Young argues is decidedly Cartesian: it is the incorrigible awareness of the first person.

Descartes' claim for first person authority is grounded in his scepticism. In the First Meditation he argues that he could be mistaken about many things, including: knowing he exists in the world as an embodied being; knowing that his experiences are not radically different from the experiences of others; and knowing that his experiences are as he thinks they are. The only thing that Descartes is unable to doubt is that he is doubting. In other words, Descartes is certain that he is aware of his own inner processes. He takes his unmediated self awareness as the indubitable first person knowledge upon which all more dubious mediated knowledge is grounded. Self-awareness is thus the most authoritative knowledge in Descartes view because self-awareness is the most indubitable truth of human existence.

Young thus takes a very Cartesian approach to first person epistemic authority. But the main issue is that her version of first person knowledge becomes incommunicable leaving us wondering how it enters into public discourse as authoritative. Whilst I agree with Young that the distinction between inner experience and communicable knowledge is important, I disagree with her claim that the experience be characterised as a sort of knowledge. Young's characterisation of experience as a sort of private knowledge suggests that the experiences of pregnancy are non-physical. To show why this is the case I turn now to Frank Jackson.

ii Frank Jackson's account of experience as non-physical

Jackson describes a thought experiment in which a neuroscientist called Mary grows up in a black and white room. Mary has black and white books and a black and white television and she is well educated about many things, including having a sound knowledge in the physical sciences. She is taught all that there is to know about colour, including the details of what it is like to see colour. But, of course, she never sees colour in her black and white room. In short she knows every physical fact about seeing colour even though she has never experienced seeing colour. The question Jackson poses, then, is whether Mary learns anything new when she comes out of her black and white room and sees a ripe red tomato for the first time. Does the experience of seeing red add to Mary's knowledge of redness acquired in the black and white room? Jackson argues that Mary does acquire new knowledge by seeing red for herself. Mary is surprised by her experience. Her surprise is taken to show that some cognitive change has taken place in Mary, and that she is now acquainted with a new fact, a fact which prior to her experience she was not acquainted with. Jackson argues that she knew all the physical facts prior to her experience. She now learns a new fact which cannot be a physical fact so he claims she learns a non-physical fact. So knowing what it is like to see red turns out to be non-physical.[23] Jackson thus challenges the thesis of

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[23] Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999) rejects Jackson's argument because Jackson neglects to dwell on the kinaesthesic and proprioceptive knowledge that Mary has in her black and white prison. Sheets-Johnstone argues that Mary's "experience of movement would pointedly lack qualia" because Mary has no experiences whilst she is focusing on learning linguistic concepts in the black and white room. I suggest that Sheets-Johnstone's conception of experience is similar to Iris Young's in so far as each must agree with Jackson that the sensations in question count as epistemic

physicalism which holds that knowing all the physical facts—knowable in principle from any 3rd person perspective—is both necessary and sufficient for knowing all that there is to know. His conclusion that there are non-physical facts makes him a dualist.[24]

Let us consider the link between Jackson's argument about Mary and Young's argument about the pregnant woman. Both Jackson and Young hold that having an experience is a type of knowing. On this conception, just having an experience is a means of noticing the quality of inner episodes. Noticing is a cognitive episode so that experience is knowledge. In Jackson's though experiment, Mary does not just say "ho hum", she is surprised, because she gains new knowledge. But Mary's knowledge is incommunicable in language. Young's claim that embodied knowledge cannot be shared also makes experience non-linguistic knowledge. Again this implies that noticing that the one's experience has a certain character is the result of simply having that experience. The same notion of experience as a type of non-linguistic knowledge is implicitly held by both Jackson and Young. But this leads to a neo-Cartesian dualism precisely because experiences are understood as being non-physical.

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episodes. Sheets-Johnstone's view is that "if one were really to know "*everything there is to know about the physical nature of the world*" (Jackson 1991: 392) *one would have first of all to experience oneself as a moving, kinesthetically sentient creature.*" I shall urge below that, in line with the Sellarsian view, that having these experiences is different from knowing them. Sheets-Johnstone and Young both argue that the kinaesthetic and proprioceptive knowledge is special but they miss the real issue here which is that this so called embodied knowledge is still a mental awareness and, as such, is not clearly embodied and physical. See Sheets-Johnstone, 1999: 170-173.

[24] He is a dualist about properties and facts.

iii. zombies

From neo-Cartesian dualism there has been a growing interest in the idea of zombies who are physically like us but who lack inner experiences.[25] So long as we agree with Jackson that experiences are not physical states, we are supporting the possibility of zombies who are physically like us but who do not have any qualitative states whatsoever. Jay Garfield (1997) argues that there is a really serious problem with accepting the possibility of zombies. Here is his argument.

Garfield notes that Zombies have plenty of beliefs about what it is like, to see red for instance, but they never experience what it is like to see red. In short, zombies are mistaken in their belief that they know what it is like to see red because knowing what it is like entails having an experience. Zombies believe that they see red just like we do. So, if zombies are possible, we need to be able to show how we know that we are not zombies. Zombies really think they have experiences too, so perhaps we are mistaken about our experiences in which case we may be zombies after all.

Jackson needs to be able to answer how we know we are not zombies for his argument against physicalism to work. Mary will only know she has the relevant experience of seeing red if she knows she is not a zombie. If she is a zombie, she will sincerely believe that she knows what it is like to see red. Her belief that she knows what it is like is not enough to prove that she is not a zombie because zombies also believe that they have the relevant

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[25] My discussion of zombies is informed by Jay Garfield's public lecture at the University of Tasmania in 1997. But the literature is quite vast on the topic. See also Chalmers (1996), Moody (1994) and Dennett (1995). There are several papers in a "Symposium on zombies" in response to Moody's paper in the latter issue of *Journal of Consciousness Studies*.

experiences. Mary is cognitively identical to the zombie; they have the same beliefs. So how can Mary have any *knowledge* that the zombie lacks? There does not seem to be any way for her to show that she is not a zombie so long as we think zombies are possible. Any demonstration that she is not a zombie would simply involve her putting forward beliefs she has. But these are beliefs that the zombie has as well. So Mary fails to distinguish herself epistemically from the zombie. If zombies are possible, Mary cannot know she is not one.

We each believe that we have experiences and that zombies do not but there is no way to show that we are not zombies if zombies are possible. Nor is there any way of proving that we have experiences so long as they are non-physical, making zombies possible and making it possible that humans are zombies. The idea that we can't know we are not zombies if they are possible is logically equivalent to knowing we are not zombies making them impossible. Knowing we are not zombies makes zombies impossible because having experiences is a physical fact of being human. Having the experience is part of the physical story about humans. Therefore the complete physical story includes what we know about experiences.

Our experiences must be a physical fact to play a causal role in our knowledge that we have them. Mary's belief that she knows what it is like to see red depends on two different sorts of states: causal and epistemic. Zombies, on the other hand, have only the latter epistemic states. The cause of their knowledge is a mystery. From the human perspective, it seems impossible that there could be any beings who not only look and act like us,

but also have beliefs, unless those beings also have the causally necessary states of experience.[26]

Jackson is wrong about experiences being non-physical. Contra Jackson, the complete physical story about Mary includes facts about her experiences, or facts about what it is like. Jackson's view of experience is tied up with the Cartesian idea of private knowledge. Implicit in this account is the idea that the mental is projected onto some inner screen that is not physical. The inner screen makes our experiences private and non-physical in so far as the experiences are taken out of the body that has them and are projected into a private inner space. Whilst such an epistemology suits mythological creatures like zombies, it is too far fetched to help us understand humans' first person knowledge. We now turn to a conception of experience and knowledge that does not buy into this metaphysics.

iv the Sellarsian picture of knowledge

Wilfrid Sellars in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* eliminates the metaphor of an inner screen with his account of observational knowledge. We do not have to find our own inner screens so that we can make

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[26] Another way of putting the problem is that if experiences were non-physical we would be at a loss to explain how we could know anything about them, since experiences would lack effects. Another curious fact about zombies is that these creatures can make observations without having experiences. This is entailed in the idea that zombies have the requisite beliefs about experiences without having any experiences. But it seems making observations requires that we have qualia and these qualitative experiences are a physical fact of being human. Zombies are impossible because experiences are part of the human physical story: Being physically like us entails having experiences.

observations before we can even speak about them. Sellars uses the phrase "myth of the given" to describe the view that our observations are private knowledge that grounds all other knowledge. He argues instead that observational knowledge is always public because we have two distinct but related sets of abilities. The first is the causal relation by which certain experiences lead to particular utterances under certain conditions; and the second is the normative relation by which we develop a holistic network of concepts in order to have epistemic authority. He argues that the causal abilities extend beyond noticing things in the external world to noticing inner episodes of experience.

The first set of abilities appeals to regularities between utterances and states of affairs. For example the ability to utter "this is green" in standard conditions is symptomatic of the presence of green objects. The body of the perceiver reads off the environment like a thermometer gauges temperature, registering the environment through utterance. But merely tokening utterances in this way is not sufficient for such utterances to count as observational knowledge. The speaker must have some other more general knowledge about language, green objects and the sorts of conditions that make such an utterance true. The speaker must also know that utterances of "this are green" are reliable indicators of the presence of green objects under standard conditions. (§35) In Sellars' view, then, we do not know the object is green, even if we can say "this is green," until we also know many other related facts.

Sellars pre-empts any concern that his account of observational knowledge is circular on the basis that each particular fact depends on knowing some general fact that depends on some other prior fact ad infinitum. (§36) He says this circularity is not a worry because learning facts is a *process* that takes time

and that we can know retrospectively. The initiate to language will be engaged in this process, gaining various causal capacities over time until her utterances are understood to be reliable symptoms of the presence of certain things. At some stage the complexity of her language use will demonstrate that a normative stance is justified with respect to her behaviour. At that stage the language initiate will have acquired a range of knowledge that is developed holistically rather than atomistically. The initiate can only be said to have observational knowledge through developing the holistic network of concepts. Sellars argues that memory plays a part in his holistic vision of observational knowledge so that even though the initiate may not have known all the facts at the time, she knows retrospectively that the facts did obtain. (§37) The circularity objection is thus answered by an account of memory and recall.

Sellars' story about observational knowledge prepares the way for his account of first person knowledge. He characterises inner episodes as being private in the sense that each of us has access to our own, but also being inter subjective because we can each know about others'. (§45) Our initial ability to make reports about external objects extends to observing others' behaviour but does not yet explain how we know about our inner episodes. In Sellars' view inner episodes are explained in "the Myth of Jones." His myth is a sophisticated science fiction story about how our imagined linguistic forebears develop linguistic resources to talk about inner experiences. He begins with a language community capable only of talking about external observations including behaviours. The persons within the community have thoughts and impressions, or inner states in general, but have not yet developed the language to talk about their inner states. Initially, then, the mythical

ancestors have inner states of experience but do not yet have any knowledge about these experiences.

One of these forebears, Jones, invents psychology. (§53) Jones observes that language can be used to describe behaviour and notes that his peers behave intelligently even when they do not speak out loud. This leads him to the theoretical breakthrough that there are inner episodes present in agents both when they speak and when they are silent. He supposes these episodes cause overt behaviour. (§56) Sellars' hero, Jones, imagines that these inner episodes have an intrinsic nature modelled on overt utterances, or on speaking out loud. Just as overt speech has semantic properties, Jones proposes that there is also inner speech with the same semantic properties as overt speech. (§57) So overt speech becomes a model, perhaps not perfect, for these inner episodes. The theoretical role of these episodes is to explain overt behaviour. Sellars calls these episodes "inner speech," emphasising that they do not entail the "wagging of a hidden tongue." He emphasises that it is not built into Jones' theory that these episodes are separate substances, or that they constitute immediate experiences. They are introduced as theoretical episodes that are modelled upon and must be confirmed and thus mediated by language.

The story develops as Jones teaches other members of his community how to use the new theoretical terms and notes that others are soon competent in explaining others' behaviours. Jones and his community are able to make claims about what each other is thinking. However, there is a self reflexive twist that develops from the abovementioned practices. After competently observing each other, Jones teaches his community members how to observe their own overt behaviours and to self-ascribe inner states. Jones frowns upon them when the behavioural evidence does not support their claims and

confirms their claims when evidence fits the general picture. At some stage the others are able to self-ascribe without overt behaviour. As Sellars puts it *"What began as a purely theoretical language has gained a reporting role."* (§59) Jones and his fellow community members have learnt to report their inner cognitive episodes. They are now properly ascribed self knowledge.

But there is more. Jones has another theoretical breakthrough that concerns the invention of a new theoretical category for inner experiences, including perceptions. He calls these impressions. Although the ancestors can already make observational reports about external objects, such as "this is green" for instance, they are not yet able to observe their own perceptions. The cognitive aspect of perception - seeing that this is green - is an extension of the theoretical language Jones develops in his account of inner speech. The non-cognitive element, such as impressions of a red triangle, is not yet explained. Impressions are introduced by Jones to explain the common element between the following:

(a) he sees that the object over there is red and triangular;

(b) the object over there looks to him to be red and triangular;

(c) there looks to him to be a red and triangular physical object over there. (§60)

The common element, according to Jones, will be a visual impression. The impression is a state modelled on – as a type of replica – an ordinary visual object. So a red triangular replica is taken to be an analogue of a red and triangular object. The essential idea is that these theoretical entities have relations of comparative similarity holding between each other which correspond to the relations of comparative similarity that hold between counterpart physical objects in the world.

Jones' peers learn to use these theoretical entities to explain behaviours of others but soon use the theory to describe their own inner episodes. With time and practice the community members learn to make reports about their impressions. Note that the use of reports about these two kinds of theoretical vocabularies are to be understood as causal. Just as these speakers learn observational language for the external world, they learn also to gauge their own inner states without recourse to some mysterious inner looking. Introspection is just a causally based ability to use the theoretical vocabulary for making reports. The entities exist before we can describe them as Sellars makes clear in his claim that scientific entities like positrons exist before they are discovered.

Although it can be said that each person has privileged access to her or his own individual states, the theoretical model entails that the states are not in principle private. The concepts used to describe the states are learnt according to the agreed standards and practices of the community. The content of any concepts and their conditions of use are developed according to publicly observable things and behaviours. The Sellarsian story shows not only that people have access to their own states because they have the required linguistic concepts, but also that each has authority about her or his own states.

On this view zombies are not possible. Firstly our speech is symptomatic of states of affairs in the external world under standard conditions. Sellars argues that experiences are causally necessary and play an important role in our gaining knowledge but can never be reduced to being a type of knowledge. Our coming to know experiences, whether they be visual impressions, or other sorts of sensations, is possible only because these episodes are physical, and thus causally efficacious. Sellars argues that

experiences exist irrespective of whether we know about them, just like positrons exist irrespective of whether or not we know about them. Experiences have to exist so that external objects cause us to make certain utterances when we set out to learn language. Sellars says we can know about our experiences retrospectively in reply to the possible regress identified in his holistic vision of general and particular facts. Therefore, Wilfrid Sellars' vision of experiences as causally necessary for knowledge rules out the possibility that there could be creatures who are physically like us in every way but who lack experiences.

Sellars' account of how we know about experiences is more informative than both Jackson's and Young's stories about first person knowledge. The "myth of Jones" tells us that first person knowledge is always mediated by observational knowledge; and that observational knowledge depends upon normativity. The normativity requirement for all knowledge entails that our experiences are not radically different from each others' because they depend upon public mediation in language. We come to know our own experiences through others' experiences and not vice versa. We can therefore describe our experiences, in Sellars' view, making our knowledge about experiences as public as any other knowledge.

v. Hegel and Sellars

In chapter one, I examined Hegel's claims about feminine knowledge. The puzzle I identify is this: Hegel develops a vision of human consciousness in which the teleological concerns with human progress are decidedly masculine. But we only see them as masculine in Hegel's discussion of family life and ethics, where he draws a duty-based distinction between the sexes. He says women's and men's knowledge are different in the same way

that plants and animals are different. Each has life, but plants are rooted to one place whereas animals are free to roam around the place. Women's knowledge is immediate, which is to say non-inferential; women only know about whatever lies in front of them. Men's knowledge, on the other hand, is inferential because men are not fixed on their surroundings and circumstances, being able to think about theoretical entities.

As de Beauvoir argues, it is not that women cannot fix their attention on theoretical entities; it is that they are told they cannot so they do not. Besides, as de Beauvoir makes clear, women as mothers are too busy to contemplate theory with all the childrearing duties dumped upon them, without adequate social structures to make possible their participation in public life. But Young's argument about pregnancy goes in a different direction from de Beauvoir's. In contrast to de Beauvoir, Young argues that women do have a special type of knowledge: knowledge that men cannot have. This, in turn, suggests that women have a different type of consciousness from men, bringing Young closer to Hegel's characterisation of femininity than to de Beauvoir's.

If we take Hegel as saying that women have a different type of consciousness from men, we understand that the difference can be located in embodied experiences. Women have these whereas men do not. If we were to suppose that Hegel takes experience to be reading off the environment in the manner described above in relation to Sellars, the stage of sense certainty is early observational knowledge. Sense-certainty will apply less to women than to infants. But, as women lack self-certainty, their knowledge does not exceed the development of understanding in perception, giving women what Hegel calls "commonsense knowledge." Women have sensations and feelings, but these are not known in any particular sense. Women also have

an inner sense of unity which Hegel identifies with the sense of self, or "I." Women's knowledge, on the other hand, is never special and relates only to things in her immediate environment (including her body). Women's observational knowledge is thus well developed.

But, when we read Hegel through Sellars, it is apparent that women never have the luxury of meeting Mr Jones. Sellars' *myth of Jones* marks the moment of self-certainty described by Hegel as the desire to be recognised by another self-conscious person. This is an act of stoicism, in Hegel's story, by which the previous modes of being in the world are repressed and replaced with an understanding of human progress and the history of ideas.[27] But in Sellars' story, self-consciousness does not mean repressing anything. Instead, in Sellars' story, self-consciousness gives us the opportunity to focus upon our inner states by creating knowledge about them. The states are there before we know anything about these, according to Sellars, just as the tree is present before we properly know it to be so in Hegel's sense certainty. We know about the states as we know about trees according to Sellars and to Hegel: we know them only according to what we can agree upon: what they are *for-us*. We do not have to have private knowledge for these states in either view.

vi. Zola the pregnant zombie

Frank Jackson's story about first person knowledge and the consequent zombie problem, followed by Sellars' account of first person knowledge have prepared my way for a discussion of Zola the pregnant zombie. In this final

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[27] Teresa de Lauretis (1990) makes the point about stoicism.

section I will show that Iris Young's discussion of pregnant embodiment entails that Zola is possible.

Young argues that the pregnant woman is divided between consciousness in the eyes: observing, willing, acting and so on; and consciousness in the torso: private observations of heaviness and movements like gurgles and tickles. She says the first sort of consciousness can be shared but the latter cannot. Observing, willing, acting and so on is thus based on shared observations and normativity whilst knowledge about sensations in the torso are not based on others' knowledge. She says that she has immediate knowledge of her pregnant body and of her foetus and that she is unable to share this knowledge. The knowledge a pregnant woman has of her embodied experiences is thus deeply private, first person knowledge.

Even though Young argues that this first person knowledge is embodied knowledge, it remains to be shown that this knowledge is based on physical fact. The private nature of this so-called embodied knowledge suggests instead that it is knowledge based on a non-physical fact. Jackson's argument clearly shows that *private* first person knowledge is based on non-physical fact because experiences cannot be shared. But the idea that experiences are non-physical facts leads to the possibility of zombies who are physically like us in every respect except for the important one: zombies lack experience.

Zola is a flesh and blood zombie whose pregnancy develops like any other. Zola claims to suffer from morning sickness, for example, and complains about horrible nausea in the early stages of her pregnancy. Zola behaves like a pregnant woman with morning sickness when she retches, and she looks relieved when the nausea subsides. During the second trimester of pregnancy Zola says she feels well and her eyes sparkle in such a way that everyone believes her. Zola's belly begins to protrude and around twenty-two weeks

into her pregnancy, she says she feels the foetus moving about inside her. Zola claims to feel foetal movements and no-one expresses any disbelief on the basis that they are quite commonly felt by other pregnant women. In the final weeks before the birth, she says she feels false contractions and, when the time comes, she behaves as though she has a normally painful labour. But Zola is a zombie entailing that she does not have any of the sensations she describes.

Zola's belief that she has these experiences is not sufficient evidence to show that she does have them. Saying that she has private knowledge of the fact does not help. In fact, claiming to have private knowledge of these experiences leads to the possibility that every pregnant woman is a zombie. The difference between Zola and the pregnant woman, of course, is that Zola does not feel these things and the pregnant woman does. But how can we tell that the pregnant woman is not Zola?

Young must be able to answer this question for her argument about embodied knowledge to succeed. She claims that the pregnant woman not only knows what it is like to be pregnant, but that the pregnant woman knows better than anyone else what it is like for her to be pregnant. These are important claims with which I agree. But, so long as the knowledge of what it is like remains inarticulable and non-communicable, there is no way of showing that the pregnant woman is not mistaken about the fact that she has the experiences she describes.

Showing that the pregnant woman has these experiences entails showing that the pregnant woman is not Zola. This will only be possible if we can show that the experiences are physical states. Young assumes that experiences are physical states in her claims for embodied knowledge. But so long as experiences are physical states they are publicly observable. This is not

Young's view because she confuses private experiences with epistemic states. Epistemic states are based on publicly observable facts, however, so experiences cannot be a mode of knowing. I have shown that Zola is possible so long as Young claims that her experiences are a version of private knowledge precisely because knowledge is necessarily based on publicly observable physical facts.

Sellars gives us a better understanding of the epistemic authority of anyone, including the pregnant woman. In Sellars' view we acquire observational knowledge without noticing any inner experiences even though experiences play a causal role. The experiences cause us to utter "this is green" for instance when we see something green but, importantly the utterance is caused by the green object effecting physical changes in the body that enable us to see. The utterances are indirectly caused by experiences inasmuch as we do not need to look at the experience to see the object. We see the object and our experience is part of the causal chain without needing recourse to noticing the inner episode. In Sellars' view the utterance plays the epistemic role, not the experience. The experience has a necessary causal role even though it lacks epistemic function.

Our observational knowledge extends to noticing that someone is pregnant. Noticing a protruding belly might cause us to utter: "she is pregnant" so long as we have been introduced to the concept "pregnant." But we also need to know the conditions under which someone is pregnant: the person must be female, within an age range of teens to forties (usually) and sexually active. As Sellars argues, making a simple observation is only part of the holistic picture of knowing that what we see to be the case is in fact the case. Moreover, this external observation of someone else's pregnancy is a prerequisite for knowing anything about one's own state of pregnancy. In

other words, we need to develop a theoretical vision of pregnancy before we can properly claim to know anything about that domain.

Noticing our own experiences depends on using the theoretical language in a certain way. First, according to Sellars' "myth of Jones," there is inner speech - roughly modeled on overt speech. The pregnant woman privately talks to herself about her experiences as she figures out what is going on. Second there are the impressions, sensations and experiences that were once only theoretical but are now observed. Sensations are observed when we notice these as the sort of sensations they are. Noticing a tickle as a tickle requires that we already have beliefs about tickles according to normative standards and practices. We first know the language and later use the language to observe the sensations. The very fact that we can observe the sensations as the sorts of sensations they are depends on us knowing about them because they are publicly observable physical facts.

In Sellars' view experience is neither a type of knowledge, nor something that we can notice without prior knowledge even though experience is present whether we know it or not. He uses the analogy of molecules of gas that are present in a room whether or not we have a theory about molecules as theoretical entities that explain the physical and causal facts about air. Similarly experiences are theoretical entities that explain physical and causal facts about human knowledge. Moreover, we can learn about our experiences when we have the necessary theoretical concepts in the analogous way that we can learn about molecules when we have the necessary theoretical concepts.

Sellars' theory of experiences as causal rather than epistemic facts is preferable to Young's theory because he demonstrates that the pregnant woman not only has experiences but can also have authoritative knowledge

about what it is like to be pregnant. Young's version of authority depends on first person knowledge that cannot be communicated. Sellars' version of authority shows that first person knowledge can be communicated. Moreover, Sellars' vision of knowledge suggests that we need to communicate about our experiences so that we can continue to develop authoritative knowledge about our inner lives. He truly upsets the Cartesian apple-cart by showing that first person knowledge is grounded on third person knowledge and not vice versa. Authority thus depends upon reflection and discussion of experiences which are understood to be causally necessary for all knowledge and enriching to human life.

Talking about what it is like to give birth enables the pregnant woman to prepare herself for a deeply embodied experience. Her preparation depends on what she can learn from the experiences of others who have given birth. She learns that her experience is unique only because she is an individual body in a particular socio-historical context. But she is reassured by the fact that her experiences are not unique with respect to what can be known. The linguistically informed concepts we have about such experiences are only possible because others have agreed on various observations in childbirth. The ideas that we have about what it is like to have contractions, for instance, are developed through talking about what it is like to feel our insides drawing our attention from the world into our bodies. The pregnant woman talks about her experience with others and agrees that it pulls like period pain, gently at first and rising to the crescendo of agony. There may be subtle differences between women, according to pain thresholds and so on, but the fact that there is something to feel cannot be denied. There are sensations of wetness as the amniotic fluid gushes down and sensations of stretching wide open as the newborn pushes its way through the birth canal. During

childbirth the pregnant woman may even wish she were a zombie because then she would not feel a thing. Prior knowledge about these experiences enables the pregnant woman to prepare herself accordingly.

conclusion

Young's paper breaks the silence about what it is like to be pregnant even though her argument goes some way towards making the phenomenological descriptions secondary to a mysterious incommunicable knowledge. As Young says, machines, male doctors and medical instruments are never going to replace the subjective knowledge of the pregnant woman in the female only domain of pregnancy. But Young's argument does not fully endorse the authority of her descriptions because she fails to show how her knowledge about private experiences can enter into public discourse. Her private knowledge claim leads instead to the absurd possibility that the pregnant woman does not know what it is like to be pregnant or to give birth just in case she might be Zola. I have recommended the Sellarsian route to knowing experiences as publicly observable physical facts is a better alternative for understanding the epistemic authority of the pregnant woman. His idea that experiences are causally necessary for knowledge without being a sort of knowledge makes Zola's existence impossible.

Even though Hegel's story about conscious development can be understood as compossible with Sellars' account of observational knowledge, it is not clear why women could not develop introspective knowledge of their own states as theoretical entities. But women are left in the scepticism Hegel associates with the observational knowledge described in the early section of the Phenomenology. Rather than address the scepticism outright, Hegel turns to an account of Stoicism, by which all sensations are eliminated as an

impediment to conscious thought. In chapter three I will argue that this Stoicism leads to a conception of all humans except mothers as *psycho-zombies*.[28] In chapter five I will examine the association between the psycho-zombie and masculinity: the Stoic male who is so out of touch with his feelings that he is violent towards others. But stories about masculinity as such are only sustained by stories like Young's which claim that maternal experiences produce a special kind of knowledge.

In Hegel's view, perceptions are only appearances and cannot be said to hold any rational truth. But having rational knowledge about experiences requires developing a controlled consciousness which is no longer concerned with having experiences, but with knowing about them. Women can reason about their experiences, but only because they have access to reason in the ethical order of marriage, by which they are assigned to men. Similarly men have access to sensuous experience with their women. But Hegel's causal story need not incorporate a private knowledge claim from Descartes. Whether or not the private knowledge claim is Merleau-Ponty's is beyond the scope of this thesis. It is my view that Young reads Descartes into Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology*, and that the same reading can be transferred to Hegel's *Phenomenology* as we now find in my examination of Kristeva's vision of maternal consciousness. As I have mentioned, Young's private knowledge claim is made possible by drawing from Kristeva's claim that the pregnant woman is a divided subject. In chapter three I argue this division is made possible by reading Descartes into Hegel.

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[28] My psycho-zombies are to be distinguished from the philosophical zombies discussed above in connection with Jackson's non-physicalist conception of experience.

Chapter Three

Kristeva on maternal consciousness

Following Lacanian psychoanalysis, Kristeva sees human consciousness as divided between consciousness and the unconscious. Consciousness, she argues, is meaningful only socially and is always linguistic or textual. But conscious meaning is further characterised as deeply impersonal and, to some extent, false. She refers to Freud's mythology about the beginning of human culture, and to Levi-Strauss' insights into monogamy, as a means to showing that language must have started somewhere as an agreement about the exchange of women between men.[29] Consciousness is understood to constructed by men for men by the post-Freudian theorists. She claims that the psychological differences between the sexes are prescriptive, or normative, rather than being something with which each sex is born.

Coming to France from Eastern Europe, Kristeva's self-proclaimed leaning towards feminism and towards Marxism is summed up in her own words as "We women, like the proletariat, have nothing to lose but our chains." (1982a:8) Seeing the association between linguistic consciousness and masculinity/false consciousness, Kristeva aims to show that the "feminine" consciousness is not entirely unconscious.[30] In this chapter I shall examine Kristeva's association between the unconscious and sensations, based on her understanding of maternity. She associates the feminine consciousness with maternity, on the grounds that this consciousness is supposed to tell us

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[29] Juliet Mitchell (1974) spells out the patriarchal story very clearly in her final chapters.

[30] See chapter five for a detailed discussion of false consciousness.

something about pre-linguistic consciousness. Kristeva's association between maternal consciousness and prelinguistic consciousness is a response to Lacan's claim that the subject's "truth" lies in experiences which are ineffable. She says that Lacan argues that these experiences must be cut off from consciousness when humans learn to speak. In Lacan's theory, this is a Hegelian negation, or Marxian negativity, by which humans are blocked access to our inner experiences. The general idea is that humans are alienated from many of our experiences according to what men's laws tell us it is permissible to feel. We are allowed to enjoy sex only in heterosexual marriage, for instance, and we must overcome our innate desires to hurt others, and to behave otherwise indecently or anti-socially. The desires must be controlled and are rendered unconscious because they cannot be gratified. The only permissible domain in which the unconscious is gratified is maternity: but, according to Lacan such pleasure (and pain) is ineffable.

Kristeva disagrees with Lacan that the pleasurable and painful experiences of maternity are not completely outside language, and thus ineffable. According to Kristeva, language has two distinct types of meaning. One type of meaning is applied to language as a system of symbols with which we come to agree about the world. This "symbolic" meaning is derived completely from standards and practices of capitalist societies, rather than being the sort of consciousness we are given by nature. But, she argues, the maternal consciousness, like the infantile consciousness which we are given by nature, can be expressed textually. This "semiotic" meaning is disclosed in the way a text is expressed to produce a response from the reader. The text conveys semiotic meaning because it communicates or evokes a visceral response in the reader.

Kristeva argues that the "semiotic" meaning helps us to understand how mothers have authority. But her project shows how we *know* about humans' sensual experiences. Kristeva argues that mothers have epistemic authority in the experiences of maternity. In the preceding chapter I argued that Iris Young fails to show why mothers have epistemic authority because she claims that the experiences of pregnancy are incommunicable. Kristeva, in contrast, argues that these experiences are communicable. But, in her view, understanding why embodied experiences can be communicated entails understanding that the human psyche is divided between three sorts of states. There are the infantile *embodied* sensations of desire, pleasure and pain; there is the imagination as a kind of inner screen; and there are linguistic thoughts.

I will discuss Kristeva's claims for maternal authority in section ii, after presenting an overview of some relevant points in the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan. Lacan claims the infant must see itself in the mirror to distinguish between self and world; or inner and outer. The mirror image enables the infant to develop an imagination. In section iii I will review the "mirror phase" and "castration" before presenting Kristeva's alternative account in section iv. Kristeva presents a Hegelian conception of conscious development which she calls the thetic phase. She argues that we have access to our own experiences after we learn language. In section v, however, I compare Kristeva's view with Sellars' "myth of Jones" before identifying the problems with her claims about maternal authority in section vi.

A series of dichotomies place the mother as unauthoritative in association with inner experience, privacy, nature and, in psychoanalytic terms, the unconscious. The father, on the other hand, has authority, in association

with the "body proper," public language, the laws of culture and *human* consciousness. The transitional stage between unconscious and consciousness is described in terms of the imagination.

i. Freud and Lacan: an overview of psychoanalysis

i.i Freud - investing the body with a sexual sort of consciousness

In this section I examine Freud's claims that the "unconscious" is a remainder of the sexual experiences of early childhood: experiences which are prohibited in the transition from animal to human. Freud also suggests that mothers have this sexual kind of consciousness, particularly during breastfeeding. But most humans need to repress the sensuality of their bodies to enter into human discourse. Embodied sensations are unconscious because they do not fit into the general picture of minds as being a combination of images and words. In chapter two we encountered Young's distinction between embodied consciousness in the torso and abstract consciousness in the head. A similar distinction arises in psychoanalytic theory. But here the consciousness in the head is divided between an inner screen ("screen memory") and speech. Consciousness in the torso or, more precisely, felt sensations in the entire body fall under the psychoanalytic rubric "unconscious."

Freud imagines the infantile consciousness as being a field of erotogenic sexuality.[31] In Freud's view, infantile experience is focused on the mother whose breast brings a kind of erotic pleasure during feeding. He characterises the impressions of infants in three stages. Starting with awareness of oral satisfaction in suckling, the infant develops its primary drive in the "oral

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[31] This is most explicit in Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1977).

stage." (1977: 273) The satisfaction of emptying the bowels follows later, (the anal stage) and finally the infant develops genital awareness through emptying the bladder (the genital stage). He claims that infants, like the average woman, are "polymorphously perverse." (1977: 268) But in Freud's view, the impressions of infancy are uncivilized. The journey into civilisation is thus a journey which entails repression of these sensual impulses and the development of language and morality. In Freud's view, this journey also explains our identification as either masculine or feminine.

Freud associates masculinity with paternalistic authority. He does not have anything positive to say about femininity.[32] He is more interested in speculating about the mental development of infants and their relationship to, first, the mother and later the father. Freud claims that the mother is a source of infantile pleasure. He conceives of the pleasure of breast feeding as foundation for the erotic pleasure of both sexes. He says the mother leaves "memory-traces of the impressions and unfulfilled wishes" of infancy. (1977: 392) In Freud's view, the unfulfilled wishes are particular to the male infant, who he argues sees the father as his sexual rival for the mother. Freud claims that the male infant desires a sexual relationship with his mother but the desire is repressed in the Oedipus Complex.

Freud argues that the drives are repressed during the Oedipus complex: the time when the infant is supposed to identify with her or his same sex parent. Boys are far easier to explain than girls, in Freud's view, because it easier for him to imagine the heterosexual desire of a male child for his mother, and the subsequent recognition of his father's rivalry for their shared love object. The incest taboo is imposed by the father, with whom the male

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[32] See Irigaray, especially (1991).

infant must identify in the knowledge that he will have his own wife some day. First, however, the male infant must learn how to be a good citizen in order to develop into a man who has authority. To do this, the child realises it must give up the pleasures of his incestuous relationship with his mother and learn to be a little man.

In the case of females, the separation from the mother depends upon the girl's wanting a penis. He says girls develop penis-envy, masturbate over their father and feel jealousy towards their mothers. The jealousy turns the girl infant's attention from mother onto father. Moreover, Freud says girls must realise that they will have their own baby someday as a substitute for the penis. (1977: 673-676) [33] But, given Freud's general view that women do not carry the same degree of authority as men, maternity is also a substitute for authority. In Freud's view, then, fathers have authority and mothers do not. There is no clear explanation about this apart from the fact that "biology is destiny."(1977: 665)

The Oedipus complex is Freud's explanation of the socialization of human infants. In Freud's view, giving up the desire for the mother is a necessary condition for becoming socialised. In the Oedipus complex, desire is repressed in recognition of the incest taboo, marking a shift of focus from the mother onto the father. The infant must learn to heed paternal authority instead of falling back into the incestuous pleasures of the maternal body. The pleasurable sensations are repressed, in Freud's view, through fear of harm or death at the hand of the father in the Oedipus complex. Recognition

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[33] The basic idea holds irrespective of sexual difference that the mother causes the early pleasure of oral gratification. Freud says the oral pleasure of suckling is transferred to the girl's focus on the male sex organ. (1977: 199)

of paternal authority enables the infant to develop a human consciousness, or sense of self, in the ego.

Clearly, Freud conceives of the father as a disciplinarian. It is the father's role to observe the taboos of civilisation; an observation which requires that such basic pleasures are prohibited unless indulged according to social standards. Eating, toileting and sex are all thus regulated into the "proper place" of civilised humans. Any desire to do otherwise must be repressed, in part because uncivilised behaviour is considered more animal than human. But Freud claims the repressed drives work upon the civilised consciousness by distorting speech, or through dreams, slips of the tongue and jokes. These phenomena can direct the ego to repressed memories and the associated painful feelings which are not linguistic but are accessed through language.

Freud refers to "screen memories" as a type of impression in which childhood memories are recovered. The content of these memories are "impressions and thoughts" including desires "hunger" "love" and a kind of mental picturing. (1977: 123) He is careful to suggest that these memories are often coloured by the imagination. The imaginary element of screen memories leads him to claim they represent the present rather than the past. (126) That is, the memory must be reconstructed and is not a true image of a past event. Nevertheless, these "screen memories" are in an important sense mental impressions of the past.

Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams" marks the beginning of his work into the unconscious. The dreams are often visited as a kind of rebus, or picture puzzle. But the pictures on the memory screen can be discerned as things or objects and, as such, these can be described. In other words, these images can be symbolised, or put into words, making them conscious. So these are not properly "unconscious." The screen points towards something else: a desire.

The desire for the mother: the incestuous sexual desire which, in Freudian terms can just as well be transferred into sexual desire for an old boot! (A fetish) For, the object of desire is not important. Understanding the Freudian unconscious is just a matter of recognising that the desire wracks the flesh and disturbs consciousness somehow. Understanding desire is a matter of talking about the images and thoughts represented in the screen memories of childhood.

But it is important to note that, for Freud, the drives, or instincts are not played out on an inner screen in the head. These are embodied sensations which, in his view, have a sexual nature. In general terms, the pulsations of the drives are felt in the so-called erotogenic zones: lips, breasts, genitals. The whole surface of skin has this erotic potential in Freud's view, multiplying the locations of these sensations throughout the infant's body.

In Freud's view, then, inner experience is associated with sexual feelings which must be repressed in order to develop human consciousness. These sexual sensations are the locus of the *unconscious*. They are associated with the sexual pleasures of the infants sucking the mother's breast. These are the forbidden pleasures, more animal than human, which must be repressed in the Oedipus complex.

i.ii Lacan: jouissance, the mirror phase and castration (from sense to language)

Jacques Lacan redescribes inner experience with the French term *jouissance*. The term refers to an orgasmic pleasure: *jouir* meaning "to come." Lacan does not deny that these sensations can be felt by adult humans who are sexually active, but he does agree with Freud that these sensations have no place in consciousness proper. Lacan argues that consciousness proper is linguistic and conventional, based upon the agreement of men

described by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, a patriarchal agreement which I explain below. This linguistic consciousness is nevertheless tempered by unconscious desires which structure speech, but which cannot be reduced to speech. The repression of desire is made possible by recognition of the self as a self in the mirror and the development of imagination in order that each person sees her or himself as others her or him. The speaking subject is thus divided, in Lacan's view, between repressed desire, an inner screen and symbols; a division which takes place during prelinguistic infancy and is completed in the Oedipus complex, marking the transition from inner experience to speech.

In Lacan's story, the inner experiences of the infant are inchoate and meaningless. These are sensations of a body in a kind of homoeostatic flux, with the drives pulsating as a vivid sensory field. But the sensations are fragmented because there is not yet any locus of self, or subjectivity which Freud describes as the ego. The sensations are, to use a Freudian term, the id - free floating and unidentified passions of the body. The passions, or *jouissance* are driven by the infant's basic needs. They are visceral, or felt, but cannot be identified as such.

At around the age of six months, however, Lacan argues that the infant's consciousness becomes divided between awareness of its inner states and awareness of the world. The infant's awareness of the external world culminates in a mirror image, in Lacan's view, which becomes a signifier, or representation of the self as a self. Through this process of identification with itself, the infant sees itself reflected in others, particularly at this stage in the mother. She is experienced as someone who can satisfy the basic needs experienced in the infants visceral being. But, Lacan argues that the infant's recognition of the mother as being the one to fulfil basic needs turns the need

into a demand. Among the basic needs of the infant is a need for love, so satisfaction is withheld if love is not offered with the breast, bottle or whatever. The difference between need and demand, then, is the recognition that the mother's love surpasses the particularity of the need. (Lacan 1977:286)

Hegel is an important reference for understanding Lacan's rendition of the mirror phase.[34] The phase marks a transition in consciousness from the immediacy of sensations to the mediation between self and world. The infant begins to see his mother as part of the world, rather than just experiencing her as an extension of self. The idea here is that, prior to the image, the infant is unable to distinguish anything as separate and experiences need and supply in some vague undifferentiated fashion. To put it in the Hegelian terms introduced in chapter one, the need is universal and lacks any particularity in terms of recognition of objects. The consciousness of need is similar to Hegel's sense-certainty insofar as subject and object are fused and not yet distinct.

But the recognition of difference enables the infant to see the mother as separate. The mother is perceived as an object, but the infant as subject is not yet a proper subject. The need for the breast is addressed to the mother, or demanded by the infant. The mother must mediate between the infant and its need by offering the breast (or bottle, food, etc.). In Lacan's view, the particular need - sustenance - is transcended by the added requirement for the mother's love. The need for the breast is a particular need which is mediated through the demand for the mother's love. Through love, the mother negates the need by providing sustenance. But, in Lacan's view, the

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[34] Zizek makes this point. He shows how the need-demand-desire trilogy is a Hegelian "negation of negation." (2001: 121-122).

difference between the appetite for food and the demand for love leaves the infant in a state of desire. He says "for both partners in the relation, both the subject and the Other [mother], it is not enough to be subjects of need, or objects of love, but that they must stand for the cause of desire." (287)

The "subject of need" is the infant under the domination of its visceral states. This needy subject is not truly a subject, in Lacan's view, until it goes through the process of recognition in the "mirror phase." The mirror phase enables the infant to get a grasp on the distinction of subject and object, or self and other through desire. Desire comes about, according to Lacan, because the subject needs sustenance for its survival and satisfaction, but the need is cancelled with the object of the demand. Even though the need is met with food, for example, the demand requires more than the object, such as food for survival. The object does not fulfil the need because the demand requires the added dimension of love. The result, presuming that the demand for love is not met, is desire. In Lacanian terms, the desire stands for lack.

From a Hegelian perspective, we see that the immediate sensations of need are sublated. Need is negated in the transformation of demand. This negation effectively posits the object of need. That is the infant sees the thing it wants and loses consciousness of the need through demanding that thing. The infant is no longer a passive recipient of the breast: the infant now indicates that it wants the breast. The infant must distinguish itself from the breast in the act of demanding what it wants. The breast does not fulfil the need, bringing the infant back to notice its own experience of wanting. This movement negates the object which was posited and brings the infant back to awareness as a subject. That awareness is nevertheless an awareness that something is lacking: love. In Lacan's view, the supply of sustenance does not fulfil the demand for love and the subject is left desiring. (297)

Lacan describes the desire as a "spaltung" or splitting of the subject. The need, we remember corresponds to the immediate sensations and inner *jouissance*. The demand, on the other hand, is intentional. The intentional act of demanding is a process of signification. The infant signifies what it wants: the breast. The infant as a subject is left desiring, the gap being formed between the inner sensations, or need, and the intentional act of demand. The need is intrasubjective and the demand intersubjective. So the subject is divided between its inner sensations and its intersubjective communication with others.

But, still in the Lacanian "mirror phase" the subject does not yet have a proper sense of itself in relation to objects or others. He calls this stage imaginary because the infant has access to both need (inner sensations) and demand (for objects and others that can only be imagined, not perceived). To put it another way, the infant remains divided between inner self and self-in-the-world. The mirror image serves only to identify with the self-in-the-world, enabling the infant to make demands through the recognition of others-in-the-world. The infant begins to develop concepts to signify its demands. This is a "thetic" process which I discuss in more detail below. But it also has access to the sensuality of its own *jouissance*. The process of developing proper concepts depends upon a negation of the *jouissance*, or anti-thesis, so that the concepts are abstracted from their sensual content. The object is thus symbolised, or put into words.

But the shift to using symbols requires intervention from the father, in Lacan's view. Prior to this intervention, the child is in an imaginary state of plenitude because it has access to itself both as subject of need and of demand. The mother fulfils the gap between needs and demands. But rather than her being the symbolic phallus for her child - this is too paternal - Lacan imagines

that the child wants to be the phallus for its mother. That is, the mother mirrors the child's desire back to it and the child thinks it fulfils its mothers desire. (289) This is a tribute from Lacan to Freud: the child is a penis substitute. But the phallus, as Lacan uses the term, is not a penis. Instead it is a *signifier*. For the phallus, as a signifier, or part of a linguistic system must fill the gap between need and demand: the gap of desire. To fill this gap, though, the child has to learn language.

Language in Lacan's view is a social construct which is more inclined to describe how things ought to be rather than how things are. The ought is prescribed by patriarchy, as the law of the fathers. Language begins, Lacan offers, in the "primal horde." The father of the horde keeps all the women to himself and his brothers seek revenge by killing their greedy father. The remorse suffered after the murder leads the brothers to establish a pact, or agreement. They eat their father, in Freud's version of the story, the cannibalism signifying the internalisation or incorporation of the father.[35]

Language takes centre stage in Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud's story about the "primal horde."[36] He says language enables them to make this pact, by which they agree never to kill each other again and, to prevent such an act, they agree to share the women between themselves. The story is taken as the mark of patriarchy: an agreement between men, for men.[37] Within this patriarchal order men have authority and women lack authority. Lacan takes

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[35] Lingis (1996) reiterates this Freudian point, which is often overlooked.

[36] Mitchell (1974) makes this point, arguing that Lacan draws from Claude Levi-Straus' structural anthropology.

[37] As Grosz says, this myth already presupposes patriarchy. The father is dominant and already has all the women and the brothers assume a right to have their own women. (1991:69)

the *phallus* to be the symbol of authority: the phallus *qua authority* is something men have and women lack. But, in Lacan's view, this authority is given through *naming*. He claims that the phallus is the "privileged signifier" in "the-name-of-the-father." Language in general is this patriarchal construct: the *symbolic* phallus. It is symbolic because it organises women and men according to their relationship to authority: men have authority and women do not.

Nevertheless, in the Lacanian rendition of the Oedipus complex we must note that the child *is* the phallus. Given that in Freud's theory, pregnancy is a substitute for having a penis, Lacan claims that the pregnant woman is *phallic*. The baby is her *phallus* because it fulfils her desire - her *lack*. The woman has a privilege of her own in pregnancy. Having a baby enables her to revisit the sexual states of *jouissance* otherwise forbidden to adult humans. In other words, Lacan conceives of maternity as being full of the erotic pleasures of the infantile drives described by Freud.

Men on the other hand *lack* access to this state of embodied pleasures and pains. They are cut off from these states in the Oedipus complex. The Oedipus complex leaves men in a constant state of desire, in his view, which is also a state of lack. They are cut off from the inner states of pleasure and pain. Lacan refers to this cut as the "castration" of the Oedipus complex, through which every speaking being (both sexes) are divided between inner states of feeling and language which is fundamentally "void" of sensuous experience. This void of feeling is the "want-to-be" of a subject who must find meanings in the world in an attempt to make up for this lack of inner experience.

Desire mediates between the void and the world. Desire is a want for something we do not have. In Lacan's view, language is a constant attempt to

fulfil desire. He calls language a symbolic "phallus" to make clear that it is a patriarchal tool which fills the void of experience. He claims that language fills the gap of being. The gap of being is the *lack*, or desire produced when the infant gives up its incestuous desire for mother. Learning language and gaining knowledge is thus a constant attempt to make up for the loss of pleasurable sensations which, in this story, have no place within language and culture.

i.iii summary

Let me reiterate the main points from this very broad overview of Lacanian psychoanalysis so that I can better situate Kristeva's theory of maternal authority. First, the unconscious is not played on an inner screen. The unconscious is, rather, the consciousness of feelings in the body. Freud conceives of these feelings as infantile and undeveloped. But, most emphatically, Freud conceives of feelings as being sexual in nature. Lacan uses the term *jouissance* to describe these feelings which, he argues, have no function in language.

Lacan conceives of language as prescriptive, or normative and based on naming practices designed by men for men. He claims that having authority is only possible in language and is thus "phallic." To have authority is to have a symbolic phallus in virtue of linguistic competence. This does not mean that women do not have authority in virtue of using language. But it does mean that no-one has authority about their feelings, or inner experiences. All such feelings are associated with the infantile pains and pleasures in *jouissance*. Inner experiences never develop or mature. Instead they remain accessible as private episodes which can only be accessed in

heterosexual relationships. But these experiences are also associated with maternity *and* anti-social behaviour.[38]

Maternity nevertheless has a special place in the social order of the phallus. The baby is a substitute for the mother's lost linguistic authority. The mother is thus phallic. Lacan distinguishes between having the phallus and being the phallus: having the phallus is, as we have seen, a matter of having authority. Being the phallus, on the other hand, is a matter of having access to *jouissance*. The mother's privilege is given by the fact that maternity enables her to revisit the lost sensations of infantile *jouissance*. She cannot say anything about these experiences, however, because they are not symbolic. In Lacan's view, then, mothers do not have authority but they have privileged access to their sexual sensations.

Kristeva's "revolution" in psychoanalysis is to show that these sexual experiences can be made conscious in language. She argues that the infantile *jouissance* is not cut off, as Lacan would have it. In Kristeva's view any person of either sex can express these sensations in poetic language. She does not deny that these sensations are prohibited within a cultural context, arguing that it is a matter of breaking the rules of language to express this inner sensuality. Kristeva argues that mothers do have authority and that they can communicate their maternal experiences. She therefore attempts to reinstate maternal authority within the laws of culture rather than as the unconscious outside: as nature.

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[38] Carolyn Dean presents an interesting account of Lacan's association between experience, psychosis and criminal behaviour. My account of perversity in chapter five supports and explains the correlation in more detail.

ii. Kristeva on maternal authority

2.1 The chora - organising embodied experience

As I mentioned earlier, Kristeva conceives of language as having two functions. She does not completely reject Lacan's views about the symbolic function of language. Like Lacan, she imagines a division developing during infancy, between sexual sensations in the body and imagination in the head, so the infant can learn language. She agrees with Lacan that language is prescriptive, or normative, based largely on capitalist ideology. Following Lacan, she associates language, or the symbolic function, with paternity and masculinity. But Kristeva develops a theory about a second linguistic function associated with maternity and femininity. This second linguistic function serves to express the sexual feelings which Lacan argues must be repressed in order to learn language. Unlike Lacan, Kristeva argues that inner experiences are communicable. It is just that they cannot be communicated in ordinary language, depending instead on using poetic language to evoke experiences in others.

Kristeva calls this alternative linguistic function semiotic. She says

We understand the term "semiotic in its Greek sense: ... distinctive mark, trace, index, precursory sign, proof, engraved or written sign, imprint, trace, figuration. This etymological reminder would be a mere archaeological embellishment (and an unconvincing one at that, since the term ultimately encompasses such disparate meanings), were it not for the fact that the preponderant etymological use of the word, the one that implies a *distinctiveness*, allows us to connect it to a precise modality in the signifying process. (RiPL: 35)

The precise modality, she says, is described in Freudian psychoanalysis as "primary processes, which displace and condense both energies and their

inscriptions." I have argued above that these are the sexual sensations of the infant, distributed as libido through erotogenic zones. These are the infantile drives: "[d]iscrete quantities of energy" moving through the body of the infant who, Kristeva says, is not yet a subject. The infant will only become a subject in her view, when it is a self-conscious language user.

Kristeva characterises this pre-linguistic consciousness as though the body is a screen. She describes the infant's body as being impressed with "'energy' drives and 'psychical' marks." The infant is conscious of the sexual sensations as they move through its body, leaving impressions in some embodied memory. She says the sensations

articulate what we call a *chora:* a non expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated. (35)

She imagines the infant's body surging with energy charges which stop and start. She calls this embodied energy a *chora*. She says the term is Plato's, taken from the *Timaeus* . In a footnote, Kristeva describes *chora* as the necessary space, or receptacle for reason, being "unnameable, improbable, bastard." (RiPL: n12, 62) The chora is "bastard reasoning" because it is borne out of maternal space and does not yet require intervention by the father who, in the psychoanalytic context, brings language into the field of conscious experiences. Kristeva says the consciousness of the chora precedes the distinction between self and world, subject and object. The chora is amorphous, indistinct "pre syllable, preword." (n.13, 62) As such, the chora is conscious experience: but it is not experience of anything as "it is."

There is a succession of impressions but Kristeva claims that the awareness is not organised in time, space or truth. (35, 36) She says the movement of these moments through time and space is rhythmic. She describes the

infantile drives that operate in relation to stases; starting and stopping as contradictory positive and negative forces that are constantly waging war against each other. The drives are "charges" which are negated by "stases:" these charges and stases being neurophysically produced within the infant's sensory and motor nerves. Over time, she argues, there is a basic registering of "voice, gesture, colours." (R: 37)

This early stage of "bastard reasoning" is supposed to describe the consciousness of a creature who is purely "natural." In the Freudian/Lacanian conception of this very early stage of human life, the consciousness is supposed to tell us something about our natural state. They say this state is dispersed throughout the body as a sexualised libido. The polymorphous *jouissance* of the infant is innate and natural. In the views of Freud and Lacan, then, the consciousness of early infancy is not socialised.

Kristeva's claims about the chora indicate that *even at this early stage* consciousness is not purely "natural." She claims that the ability to register particular types of sounds, movements or images depends on an interaction with the mother or primary caregiver. Kristeva emphasises the interface between "nature" and "culture" in this early stage. On one hand she emphasises the role of the mother in socialising the infant. But on the other hand she suggests the abilities to register voice and gesture are innate. Her theory of the chora aims to show that the early caregiving is essential for preparing the infant for language by encouraging the processes of natural development. She says the energy drives are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body – always already involved in a semiotic process – by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are "energy" charges as well as "psychical" marks, articulate what we

call a *chora*: a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full as movement as it is regulated. (35)

The *chora* is thus both an innate force and a regulated force. Kristeva describes the innate libidinous energy drives as though they are impressed from without, marking consciousness with impressions from the world and making basic connections. The word "articulation" is emphasised by Kristeva in contrast to "disposition." The infant is not yet able to articulate anything in language. She says:

> The *chora* is not yet a position that represents something for someone (i.e., it is not a sign); nor is it a *position* that represents someone for another position (i.e., it is not yet a signifier either); it is however, generated in order to attain to this signifying position. Neither model nor copy, the *chora* precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm. We must restore this motility's gestural and vocal play (to mention only the aspect relevant to language) on the level of the socialized body in order to remove motility from ontology and amorphousness. (35-36)

Nothing is represented in the chora, according to Kristeva, so it is neither sign nor signifier; impression or idea. The chora is pure consciousness or awareness in which nothing is known as the kind of thing it is, but in which the infant is nevertheless conscious and responding vocally to her surroundings. Kristeva says these responses are relevant to language, and indicates these responses will have an epistemic function.

In a footnote, Kristeva explains that the *chora* is only qualitative. She thus indicates a felt experience: a basic sense of quality. She emphasises the point made above that the qualitative consciousness is not representing anything. There is no "this" or "it is" which, I must point out, would be the case if this were a version of Hegel's *sense-certainty*.

Kristeva claims the *chora* is a necessary condition of language and thus of knowledge. In her view, however, the *chora* does not have an other-directed epistemic function. She does not think there is any awareness of things as the things they are. But she does think there is an awareness of awareness itself.[39]

Kristeva's idea that the qualitative consciousness of infancy is not yet epistemic, but will become so, is an attempt to break down the psychoanalytic distinctions between unconscious/conscious in relation to the sexes mother/father. In Freudian and Lacanian theory, the unconscious experiences of infancy are opposed to the conscious discourses of culture. The unconscious experiences are supposed to be purely natural and discourse purely social, particularly in Lacanian theory. To break down the dichotomy between nature and culture, Kristeva argues that the infant is already developing in a social context. She attempts to blur the nature/culture distinction operating between qualitative experience and maternity in opposition to language and paternity. She does not mean to argue that the *chora* is an ontological essence; nor does she mean to make an epistemological claim that the *chora* is prelinguistic knowing. Instead she claims that the infant has innate abilities, both genetic and neurophysical, which are developed in a social context.

Kristeva claims that the mother, or primary caregiver has a kind of social authority over her infant. The mother is not a purely natural force engaged in some sexualised relationship with her infant, as Freud and Lacan would have it. The mother is as much a social creature as any other human, having long ago internalised the so called fathers' law. Kristeva refers to the prohibitions described in the Lacanian vision of language as an instrument of

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[39]This paragraph and the next have been edited - eds

patriarchy. Kristeva's point is that the first weeks or months of infancy are already socially contextualised. There is no pre-social void. The infant is already being subjected to social standards right from the beginning of life.

Kristeva disagrees with Lacan that paternity is authoritative and maternity non-authoritative. She aims to show that the mother has an authoritative role in these formative stages of infant development. In Kristeva's words:

> Through frustrations and prohibitions, this authority shapes the body into a *territory* having areas, orifices, points and lines, surfaces and hollows, where the archaic power of mastery and neglect, of the differentiation of proper-clean and improper-dirty, possible and impossible, is impressed and exerted. (1982b: 72)

Kristeva argues the mother socialises the infant's body according to what is permissible, imposing certain cultural standards like cleanliness upon the infant. She regulates both the mouth and the orifices of excretion, keeping them clean and presentable as prescribed in Western cultures.[40] The mother cleans her baby's mouth, and wipes the baby's bottom, observing hygiene standards and thinking that she will judged by others according to those standards. Kristeva says that the mother impresses these prohibitions on her infant. In Kristeva's view, these impressions are the mark of maternal authority.

In this section I have argued that Kristeva, through the theory of the *chora*, attempts to break down the idea that the first months of infancy are purely natural. She argues that the conscious development of the infant is already situated in a social context. Her theory about the chora also aims to show that

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[40] Kristeva argues that Lacan's theory is focused upon prohibitions in Western capitalist cultures. She acknowledges the Marxian influence on Lacan. Note that Lacan attended Kojeve's lectures, presenting a reading of Hegel through Marxian theory.

the mother is not just a purely natural force in some sexual experience with her infant. Rather, Kristeva offers a theory of maternal authority to show that even before language the mother is working within a context of socially determined standards and practices.

2.2 Kristeva's Thetic Phase: bringing experience in to language

Kristeva aims to show that experiences are not deeply private and incommunicable. Her chora is presented as though the infant has consciousness and reads off its environment, registering various kinds of responses. The main idea is to show that socialisation begins with the mother in the early stages of infancy. Her idea of a thetic phase builds upon her earlier claims to counter the clean division between femininity and masculinity; nature and culture; experience and knowledge in Lacanian theory. In section one I said that Lacan claims that consciousness divides or splits in the mirror phase to make way for representations of self and world. The self is left desiring because it cannot represent experiences: it can only represent objects in the world. Subjective need is negated by objective demand, objective demand is negated by want for love. More demands bring more objects to satisfy needs with the overall want left unsatisfied. Learning language helps to state what is wanted, but using language requires focusing outwards, into the world of objects and others. The infant thus loses sight of its inner experiences, especially after the father intervenes and prohibits the incestuous relationship with the mother. In Lacan's rendition of the Oedipus complex, experiences are cut off from language.

Kristeva disagrees that the infantile experiences are cut off from language. Her argument is based on the idea that the sense of self must be developed through recognition of objects as distinct from the self. But, she argues, there is a phase between the *chora* and the symbolic use of language which is not

just a child's imaginary world of mirror images, need and demand. In Kristeva's view, this is also a phase of trying to use language. But this is not yet proper language. In this phase, Kristeva claims the language is "semiotic."

To flesh out Kristeva's rather brief example, the infant may be in the presence of a dog that comes up to her and licks her face. The infant responds to the dog by saying "woof-woof." The response is semiotic, in Kristeva's view, because the child is able to identify and posit a dog as something separate from herself. The response is the "nucleus of judgment or proposition." She says that this ability "contains the object as well as the proposition, and the complicity between them." (40) In a footnote, Kristeva indicates that meaning is not possible unless propositional. She suggests meaning depends upon expressing the concept of an object. (65n29) So the infant's semiotic expression of "woof-woof" has propositional content, in Kristeva's view. It is therefore meaningful even though it is not properly symbolic.

Moreover, she says all animals thereafter will carry the same response. The cat brushes past the infant and elicits the same response: "woof-woof." The response is an attribution of sorts, which is to say that it is a response to something noticed as being a member of a broad and furry category. Kristeva suggests that this semiotic response to animals is not yet properly epistemic. But the infant has learned this response and, even though the response is not yet a proper concept, the response shows that the concept is beginning to develop in which case the thetic phase has begun. The semiotic utterance is an indication that the infant recognises the existence of something separate from herself.

She says the response "woof-woof" attributes a "signifier to an object through a "copula" that will function as a signified." (41) The proposition is

the thesis of this stage of positing something. But Kristeva suggests that two positions must be developed in consciousness. There is the signified object and the signifier, or propositional construction. This distinction makes sense only if we imagine that there is an object in consciousness and a speaker in consciousness. We can further imagine the little voice coming from a place opposed to the screen upon which the objects can be seen.

Kristeva says the thetic phase is that which makes possible any speech because, in her view, speech requires a structural division between the object in consciousness (signified); the inner experiences/speech of a subject (chora/signifier). The signifier, as the subject or self in this analysis, becomes divided between semiotic and symbolic functions. As Kristeva puts it:

> Not only is symbolic, thetic unity divided (into signifier and signified), but this division is itself the result of a break that put a heterogeneous functioning in the position of signifier. This functioning is the instinctual semiotic, preceding meaning and signification, mobile, amorphous, but already regulated, which we have attempted to represent through references to child psychoanalysis (particularly at the pre-Oedipal stage) and the theory of the drives.

By showing that language develops through trial and error, with the example of "woof-woof," Kristeva claims the subject as a signifier is also positioned in relation to inner experiences. These meaningless experiences are always heterogeneous to speech because they do not literally fit into the system of language. The experiences can nevertheless erupt into speech to add texture to the spoken propositions.

2.3 Kristeva's negativity: expressing experience in language.

The thetic phase prepares the way for Kristeva's view that experience is expressed in language. Kristeva argues that the "fourth term of the dialectic is negativity." (74) This negativity, she says, is to be found in the subject who operates outside logic. (73) She refers here to the conscious experience of the subject in the context of Freud and the infantile libido. The experiences of jubilant pleasure, of aggression and of rejection are discussed to highlight her point that Hegelian negativity is pre-Oedipal and thus extra-linguistic. She says that "artistic games" can disturb the smoothness of the symbolic system by bringing back the repressed element of experience. (76)

To put "rejection" in its Freudian context, Kristeva refers particularly to the anal drive. There is a pleasure associated with the rejection of the faeces, bringing about an association between loss and pleasure, says Kristeva. Moreover, the experience of separation through expulsion is the infant's first experience of pleasure in this very Freudian view. She says that psychoanalysts conceive of this pleasure as an attack directed not only towards the shit, but also towards all objects including the father and mother. This aggression is held in check, she says, by the infant's identification with one of its parents. "Rejection is thus a step on the way to the object's becoming sign, at which the object will be detached from the body and isolated as a real object." (78) In psychoanalytic terms, this rejection enables the development of the superego which censors thought and speech. She refers to a repressed anal or oral drive, making the subject feel something in his or her "sphincters." She relates the repressed oral drive with the mother and the repressed anal drive with the brothers. And she argues that avant-garde writers split the texts to evoke sensations in others. (79) So, for Kristeva,

Freudian rejection is a clue to understanding that which must be repressed in the Oedipal complex.

The mother's body is associated with the Freudian oral stage, and is expressed with various vocal emissions to signify the mother's "throat, voice and breasts: music, rhythm, prosody, paragrams, and the matrix of the prophetic parabola." These are written into some avant-garde texts. She cites Mallarmé's "glottal spasm" as an example. Other examples integrate "'sweet' sounds, 'pleasant' sounds and poetic musicality." (80) These are all contrasted with the aggression of the anal stage and the imposition of unity "*one* logic, *one* ethics, *one* signified: *one* but *other.*" (79) The one is the unitary speaking voice of the subject, who in the psychoanalytic context is also other because the speaking subject always represents things beyond her or himself. As I have mentioned earlier, the unitary subject of psychoanalysis cannot represent her or his inner experiences by following linguistic conventions. But the point of all this psychoanalytic theory for Kristeva is to show that inner experiences can be expressed through breaking the grammatical or syntactical rules. For Kristeva, then, the inner is expressed by transgressing the Oedipal taboos. The Oedipus complex brings about the symbolic castration through which the inner experiences are supposed to be fully repressed. But Kristeva returns to Hegel to show why they are not fully repressed.

In Hegelian terms, Kristeva argues, rejection is conceived as negativity. She says "Hegel can only supersede the exteriority of Repulsion that Freud has set out." (84) Supersession entails negation of the experience and positing a concept. Importantly the Hegelian supersession takes place during the thetic phase, in the developing consciousness of unity. Kristeva cites, from Hegel's *Logic,* his exposition of the One as both positive and negative of itself.

He says the infinity of objects, or properties, enables the One to "pass beyond itself" but that this is made possible through the immediacy of the One. In other words, it is only because there is conscious experience - albeit immediate - that there can be a concept. Repulsion, in his terms, is the shifting of awareness from the felt experience of an object onto the object itself. But the repulsion is made possible by having an experience, which is as much an experience of self as it is of the object. Kristeva cites Hegel in italics: *"Repulsion is its self-relation and simple self-identity."* (RiPL: 84)

Kristeva presents the following criticism of Hegel:

> What Hegel does not envisage is the moment the One is *shattered* in a return of Repulsion onto itself, which is to say, a turning against its own potential power for positing and multiplying the One. Nor does Hegelian logic see the heterogeneous parcelling of the symbolic, which underlies the symbolic's very constitution and constantly undermines it even while maintaining it in process; the simultaneous existence of the boundary (which is the One) and the a-reasonable, a-relative, a-mediating, *crossing of* the boundary; or the possibility of the constitution-unconstitution of the One meaning-nonmeaning, passing through categorical boundaries ("inside," "one," "multiple," etc.), which is precisely what *rejection* brings about in the "schizoid" process of the text. (RiPL: 84)

In other words, the unity of the subject is shattered when consciousness is turned back onto itself to feel the disunity of its own embodied states. Even though Hegelian perception enables the subject to see objects as being in the world, Kristeva argues that there is awareness of experience. This is because, as discussed above, her version of the thetic phase takes consciousness to be divided between inner experience of consciousness and consciousness of objects. Her citation of Hegel above suggests that the subject has simple self identity. But in her view the self must be contained because of the impulses which must be socialised. It is only in virtue of containing the self through

repression of impulses that the unitary self is possible, in Kristeva's view. The self must be constructed according to what is socially acceptable: everything else is not rational, nor relative, nor even mediating. The rest is just the experiences of the self which must be repressed, according to psychoanalytic theories, and contained within the boundaries of a unitary speaking self. But the very fact that the boundaries are constructed, through constraint, indicates for Kristeva that they can also be crossed. Just as people can break the laws of society, so they can break the laws of language. In so doing, Kristeva argues, the text becomes "schizoid" because it expresses the very meaning which is supposed to be inexpressible.

In Kristeva's vision, the Hegelian dialectic is constantly expelling experience to someplace beyond the unity. Each time a unity is posited, she says the negativity leads to a series of "scissions." The scissions indicate that consciousness divides and has an unconscious element. She says these "act with the regularity of objective laws and recall." (85)

iii Critique of Kristeva

It is my view that Kristeva attempts to show that the prelinguistic infant has the ability to respond to its environment in a fashion similar to that described by Sellars. The infant has an innate but developing ability to "register" certain things and respond with sounds. I will say more about this in a minute.

iii.i empirical evidence which does not support Kristeva

First I must make clear that there is an implicit first person element to Kristeva's account. She suggests the infant has a qualitative sense of what it is like to be an infant. The first person aspect of Kristeva's chora is implicit, and develops in her account of the thetic phase. Alison Gopnik's paper "How

we know our own minds" strongly supports the Sellarsian view, that we cannot know our own minds until we have a grasp of observational knowledge including observation of others' behaviour. Gopnik argues that infants are unable to grasp others' intentions until around the age of three and a half, when they begin to get a better grasp of their own psychological experiences. Kristeva, on the other hand, indicates that we are aware of our psychological experiences in early infancy even though we do not know them as particular experiences. But, in Kristeva's view, we begin to grasp our own experiences as particular experiences between the ages of six to eighteen months. Here is a summary of Gopnik's research.

Alison Gopnik (1993) argues that we do not know our own minds until we have a theory about others' minds. She says that many of us are mistaken to think of our mental states as "the underlying entities that explain our behaviour and experience." (1) She refers to "psychological experience" as a stream of consciousness which is distinct from our experiences of things like rocks and trees. The question she raises is whether these experiences are given to us as first persons or whether they are derived cognitively as third persons. Kristeva and Lacan argue for the first person route for psychological experience and for the third person route for language. But Gopnik argues that psychological experience is also known through the third person route, suggesting that the first person recognition of the mirror phase is false.

Gopnik cites research showing that infants do not *begin* to distinguish between "physical objects and mental states" until around the age of eighteen months. This ability develops through the second year but it is not until the age of three that the child can "understand the ontological difference between physical states and mental reality." (3) Gopnik correlates this ability to recognise the difference between world and self with an ability to "understand

differences between their own mental states and the mental states of others." (3) Even so, research shows that these children are not yet competent in understanding things the way that adults do.

In one test, children are shown a picture of a green cat superimposed with a red filter. Three year old children see that the cat looks black but they are unable to understand that it is not really black. (Flavell et al. 1986) Gopnik says Flavell and co. performed further tests to check that the error was not just a linguistic error. The children continued to demonstrate an inability to discern appearance from reality. In "false-belief" tests with lolly-boxes filled with pencils the children failed to recognise that others will be fooled by the trick. The children, aged three, "consistently say that the other person will think there are pencils in the box," even when told that such a belief is false. (4) Citing a range of similar types of tasks, Gopnik claims that three year olds do not yet properly understand that others do not share their beliefs, nor do they properly understand that some beliefs are false. Four year olds, she argues, develop these competencies lacking in their previous year.

Gopnik argues that the shift takes place in the third year. Children think they understand representation, she says, but they do not so long as they fail to understand misrepresentation. Having a correct world view requires a representational model of mind. This is to say that the mind develops according to an understanding of how we represent.

Desires, perceptions, beliefs, pretenses, and images all involve the same basic structure, one sometimes described in terms of propositional attitudes and propositional contents. These mental states all involve representations of reality, rather than direct relations to reality itself. Perceiving, desiring, believing become perceiving, desiring and believing *that*. Rather than distinguishing different types of mental states with different relations to a real

world of objects, the child sees that all mental states involve the same abstract representational structure. (1993: 6)

Gopnik argues that there is no prelinguistic ability to represent anything. An infant who sees its image in the mirror at the age of six to eighteen months will fail to believe *that* the image is an image or *that* it sees itself. Language is required to formulate these beliefs in propositional form. Gopnik takes empirical research to support the thesis, offered also by Sellars, that all representational states are mediated by language. This is not to say that there are two – or more – types of mental states: psychological experience and psychological concepts. Instead, this suggests that psychological experience cannot represent anything, least of all itself, until it has been developed in a socio-cultural environment to use shared concepts.

Put simply, we can no more peer into our own minds to get a sense of the sexual sensations that Lacan and Freud associate with infancy than we can peer into a mirror at the age of six months and identify the image as one to be associated with those infantile sensations. These claims are not based on empirical research. Rather, the mirror phase is supposed to tell us how we rise above the animal kingdom.

Second, Kristeva speculates about the timing over which the infant can register certain things, including voice. Empirical research shows that the infant responds to its caregiver's voices within days and can discern between the language of its caregivers and other languages within weeks. Research also shows that the infant registers, or responds to human faces within hours of birth. Karmiloff-Smith's research shows that these responses are innate, but are developed in a social context.

Karmiloff-Smith argues that the human infant develops an ability to communicate with others quite early because, unlike many other species,

human infants are not able to move around their environment. The immobility of the human infant leads to a developing ability to point at objects in her environment, initially by directing her gaze at the desired object and assuring "joint attention" by securing the gaze of her caretaker. The ostensive communication carries two developmental functions, in Karmiloff-Smith's view. The pointing, or directed gaze function as "proto-imperatives" she says, as a non-verbal communication of want. But, she argues,

> the proto-imperatives rapidly become proto-declaratives; that is, a point becomes the infant's means of making a nonverbal comment about the state of the world (something like "Look, that's a nice toy") rather than a request to obtain it. (122)

So, the initial function of the ostensive communication indicates a child's want for something it cannot reach. But the development of this communication extends to non-verbal expression about that kind of object rather than simply expressing desire for it. (121-122) The idea is that the infant learns to build upon her endogenous abilities through interaction with others. Karmiloff-Smith shows that infant development depends on certain innate abilities which are developed through communication with carers.

In this section, I have suggested that Kristeva does not fully dispense with a first person account of infant development and that this is unwarranted. I have also shown that empirical research both supports and discredits Kristeva's theory. She is supported in the vision of the infant as developing according to both innate and external factors. She is not supported in her claims about voice and face recognition "over time" because research shows these abilities are innate.

3.2 Kristeva and Hegel

Kristeva's theory about the chora attempts to overcome a Hegelian version of immediate knowledge. Unlike Hegel, Kristeva argues that there is no knowledge in this early stage of life and that the infant simply responds to its environment. But she does not deny first person access of the infant to its own experiences. This is a Hegelian account according to which unmediated experience becomes immediate knowledge. For Kristeva, as for Hegel, the distinction between self and world marks the mediation of concepts. In the chora this distinction is not present.

Kristeva's thetic phase is Hegelian because it marks the division between consciousness of objects, as signified *in consciousness*. Kristeva suggests these objects are cast upon the inner screen, and that there is a developing homunculus, or subject position presenting commentary on the screen. The screen presents the object as anti-thesis or not-self, and the self comments on the object in the formulation of a not yet mature proposition: "woof-woof." But this semiotic response is not yet properly symbolic. In the thetic phase, the subject is also flooded with the sexual experiences of drives. So, the thetic phase is effectively a negation of the object (a dog) on the screen (signified) with the proposition (signifier) "woof-woof." But this is further negated by the semiotic excess: the jubilance, or experience of excitement the child feels (signifier) which is expressed by the tone of voice. The screen and viewer collapse back into the states of an autoerotic body.

To put it in Hegel's words:

> The two extremes [of this syllogism], the one, of the pure inner world, the other, that of the inner being gazing into this pure inner world, have now coincided, and just as they *qua* extremes, have vanished, so too the middle term, as something other than these extremes, has also vanished. This curtain [of appearance] hanging before the inner world is therefore drawn away, and we have the inner being [the 'I'] gazing into the inner world- the vision of the undifferentiated selfsame being,

> which repels itself from itself, posits itself as an inner being containing different moments but for which equally these moments are immediately *not* different - *self-consciousness.* (§165)

We have, in other words, a conscious being peering into its own mind where it coincides with the sensations of its autoerotic body. The objects, as middle term, have temporarily disappeared. But, on recognition of the sensations of itself, these are repelled to posit itself. The sensations get in the way of positing anything so they must be cast out of consciousness to get a clearer view of the objects upon the screen. Seeing the self as viewer of these objects makes way for self-consciousness.

This scenario underscores the "castration" of Lacanian theory. The self must negate its sensations to make way for concepts.

Kristeva retains the very inner phenomena that Hegel must expel to show how we know anything. Hegel himself has to move beyond this inner phenomenon because it is not only immediate experience, in his view, it is also immediate knowledge. But as I argued in the previous chapter, immediate knowledge is deeply private and, as knowledge it cannot be shared. The fact that it cannot be shared suggests that this knowledge is not based upon physical facts. The problem with this view, though, is that experience is not another physical fact which can be learned. Instead, experience can be conceived of as a non-physical fact. Thus Kristeva argues that experience can be expressed in language, demonstrating that experience is a physical fact. She claims the expression is caused by breaking the laws of language. We can therefore learn about others' experiences by listening to the semiotic content. The semiotic content adds meaning to propositions, in her view, through the expressive qualities of vocal tones, rhythms, pauses and gestures.

She argues that the semiotic content is repressed in virtue of the Hegelian sublation, through which the sensuous content is negated but preserved in the unconscious. This unconscious, in psychoanalytic theory, is discovered in analysis. The inner experiences of the subject are recovered through the talking cure. Their recovery depends upon a bond between the analyst and analysand, or the therapist and client/patient. But whether or not this recovery of experience is properly attributed to Hegel is doubtful.

From Hegel Kristeva takes elements and intersperses these in the Freudian and Lacanian contexts of psychoanalysis. Most significantly she presents the Hegelian consciousness as divided between an inner screen and inner voice. The screen brings the world into focus and the development of concepts to posit the world in language leads to the negation of experience. In her view, though, negated experience is unconscious and can be recovered.

3.3 Kristeva meets Zola

In this section I will compare Kristeva with Sellars. I have suggested that Kristeva can be read as suggesting that the infant responds by reading off the environment and responding with sounds. This is like Sellars' vision that we are like thermometers when we start out learning to develop observational knowledge. But Kristeva's vision is clearly not Sellarsian when she endorses Lacan's story about the mirror phase.

Kristeva takes experience to meaningless outside the context of other persons in the linguistic community. By meaningless she does not mean unimportant. Instead she means that experience does not have an epistemic value in itself, and is not a version of knowing. In Kristeva's view, conscious experiences can only be known through listening to others' stories about experiences. This suggests that Kristeva does not think that experience is a

type of private knowledge. But as I will show now, Kristeva is not fully committed to a non-epistemic account of experience.

During the first months of conscious development Kristeva suggests that the infant reads off its environment in a similar fashion to Sellars' story.[41] Kristeva argues the infant's sensations cause gestural responses. These responses lead, slowly, to uttering "woof-woof" in the presence of dogs and, most likely, "this is green" in the presence of green things. Moreover, Kristeva argues that language development is an ongoing process that entails knowing about standards imposed and practiced by the general linguistic community. Like Sellars, then, Kristeva takes experience to be causally necessary for developing linguistic abilities. She is also in agreement that experiences do not carry any epistemic value and become meaningful only within a communitarian context.

But there is an internal tension within Kristeva's account of infantile development suggesting a type of prelinguistic knowing despite her claims that experiences are meaningless unless contextualised in language. This prelinguistic knowing emerges first, in her claims about the semiotic chora; second, in her allegiance with Lacan regarding the mirror phase; and, finally, in her claims about the subsequent "thetic" division of consciousness between signified and signifier. I will discuss each of these in this order.

First, there is a tension in Kristeva's notion of the semiotic chora insofar as she claims that it is non-conceptual because it is non-representational, on the one hand, but that the infant is already making certain cognitive associations, on the other hand. Kristeva claims that the infant develops sensory

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[41] This is the "thermometer view" suggested in Sellars' account of learning observational knowledge. See chapter 2 of this thesis for a more detailed exposition of Sellars.

awareness and develops a response to that awareness in relationship with its mother. But she says that this is not a cognitive awareness because it is semiotic: not symbolic. The infant is nevertheless able to notice various characteristics like tone and gesture, and even colour.

Moreover, the following citation suggests that the semiotic is an epistemic rather than causal foundation:

> It may be hypothesized that certain semiotic articulations are transmitted through the biological code or physiological "memory" and thus form the inborn bases of the symbolic function. Indeed, one branch of generative linguistics asserts the principle of innate language universals. (R: 38)

Kristeva says that the "semiotic articulations" may even be "innate language universals" which, she says, are genetically programmed as "memory." In her view, then, some information is biologically inscribed, or *given* in a "biological code." Moreover, Kristeva claims that this biologically inscribed information forms "the inborn bases of the symbolic function." This "biological code" or "memory" suggests a version of sense-data indicating that sensations are a type of unmediated knowledge. She thus subscribes to "the myth of the given" in her conception of the semiotic chora, making prelinguistic consciousness a "meaningless" version of knowing.[42]

Suggesting that the chora is both meaningless and a type of knowing is a curious contradiction. The chora is meaningless, in Kristeva's view, because meaning is always socially sanctioned, or normative. She thus suggests that conscious awareness is a non-normative type of knowing because it is meaningless. But, as I argued in chapter two, such non-normative knowing

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[42]The author intended to develop the argument for the sense data analogy. - eds

amounts to a private knowledge claim, suggesting in turn the possibility that infants are zombies.

Kristeva's conception of the semiotic chora is supposed to demonstrate that, contra Lacan, the speaking subject is not a psycho-zombie. But, given that the semiotic chora is meaningless, or non-normative *knowledge* she does not succeed to explain how we know that we have experiences. As a type of prelinguistic *knowing*, experiences are non-physical facts. So long as experiences are non-physical, they are causally inefficacious. Instead of overturning the Lacanian psycho-zombie, Kristeva runs the risk of making possible the existence of philosophical zombies. She therefore makes possible the existence of Zola the pregnant zombie, which is a major hurdle for Kristeva, given that her theory sets out to show that mothers have epistemic authority.

Second, being in league with Lacan about the mirror stage suggests another instance of pre-linguistic knowing. The infant must recognize the image to be an image of itself, to formulate the first concept and to establish the opposing structures signifier and signified. The infant thus establishes a concept of itself as a self before it has any linguistic concepts. But, unless there is the prelinguistic knowing mentioned in the above citation by Kristeva viz some sort of coding, it is impossible to imagine how the infant could recognize anything as the sort of thing that it is – least of all itself.

Finally, Kristeva's conception of the infant aged between six and eighteen months developing a signified and signifier in consciousness is suspicious. It occurs to me that she is confusing the infant with a Sellarsian vision of mature consciousness. Sellars does not suppose that consciousness is structured like a language: such a vision is peculiarly Lacanian. But Sellars vision of mature consciousness suggests we have two distinct types of inner

awareness: inner speech and impressions. Kristeva apparently calls inner speech "signifier" and impressions "signified."

In Sellars' view inner speech and impressions are two versions of inner awareness that exist in competent language users. These "speaking subjects" are not only good at making accurate observational reports; they also grasp the standards and practices of their community, can make accurate associations between the behaviour of others and various types of emotional states. These are the necessary conditions that enable anyone to introspect, in Sellars' view, and to make claims about their own inner episodes. The epistemic foundation, in Sellars' view, is language. Knowing about inner episodes, whether they be inner speech or impressions, is a matter of positing these as theoretical entities. This is to say that we cannot *know* about inner episodes unless we have the necessary theoretical concepts with which to grasp such episodes as the types of awareness that they are.

For example, after observing anger, sadness, joy, frustration, pain and so on in others, given that we have learned the linguistic norms governing the concepts, we can learn to observe these states in ourselves. Inner speech is a sort of talking to oneself and the impression is our observed state. Moreover, we can have impressions of things in the world, and of our own behaviourally justified states so Kristeva's distinction between inner awareness and perceptions of the world is misleading. Her account of inner awareness as distinct from perceptions of the world entails the possibility of Zola the pregnant zombie, as I shall now explain.

iv Kristeva on motherhood: knowing about the inner screen.

In "Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini," Kristeva refers to a "preconscious screen" that is activated during maternity. She refers to an

inner screen of experience: the semiotic chora that was repressed when the mother was an infant learning to speak. But, in Kristeva's view, maternity enables the speaking subject to access the consciousness associated with her experience of her own mother in infancy. This is the experience repressed by the Lacanian psycho-zombie for everyone except mothers. But Kristeva's idea that this awareness is played on an inner screen leads to the possibility of a private knowledge claim.

She refers to maternity as a "biosocial program" that picks up messages from "an empty foundation, as a-subjective lining of our exchanges as rational beings." (MGB: 305) The biosocial program suggests that experience is coded, as shown earlier. The empty foundation suggests that the coding is nevertheless meaningless, or non-normative knowledge as a basis for developing linguistic concepts. Moreover, Kristeva says the experience of maternity - *jouissance* - is "mute." (MGB: 305) This suggests that we cannot develop concepts grounded in language about the meaningless knowledge of the maternal biosocial program. In short, Kristeva makes a private knowledge claim.

Kristeva argues that we can know about the experiences of maternity through the expression of experience in poetic language. In another essay on maternity, *"Stabat Mater,"* Kristeva presents a poetic account of her own maternal experiences.

Stabat Mater opens like any other essay written by Kristeva, with some introductory remarks about her topic - in this case maternity. The introduction is, more or less, a typical example of linguistic discourse within the so-called symbolic. But, reading on, the body of text on the page becomes split into two columns and the typical academic discourse continues on only

the right side of the page.[43] On the left side of the page - which is the side of the page we usually look to first when reading in English or French - we read the following:

> FLASH - instant of time or of dream without time; inordinately swollen atoms of a bond, a vision, a shiver, a yet formless, unnameable embryo... Words that are always too distant, too abstract for this underground swarming of seconds, folding in unimaginable spaces. (1983: 1997: 309)

Kristeva's poetic prose gives us a *sense* of pregnancy with words such as "flash," "swollen" and "shiver." Her poetic language also conveys an idea that these sensations occur outside time and outside language. For Kristeva, the semiotic chora is established prior to language (1997: 35) and, importantly, she claims that language provides a temporal space in which the chora can erupt as heterogeneous to, but part of language. (1980:101. Kristeva's style, then, presents an example of this semiotic function of language which is heterogeneous to, but coextensive with the symbolic text of her essay.

But the poetic language is not going to help her when it comes to showing that the pregnant woman is not Zola the philosophical zombie. Zola believes that she experiences flashes and shivers as her pregnant belly swells to accommodate a foetus. But, being a zombie, Zola does not have any experiences.

Knowing about experiences in maternity is *not* a matter of having access to the inner screen of infantile experience. Knowing about experiences in maternity is, instead, a matter of making observations like any other. But

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[43] This varies to some extent depending upon which edition we are reading. Kelly Oliver's (1996) version is more subtle that Toril Moi's. The latter version uses bold type for the experiential left hand side whereas Oliver's version uses plain type on both sides.

Kristeva does give us insight into the use of poetic language to not only describe feelings, but also to evoke these in others. The poetic language she uses to describe pregnancy, childbirth and maternity are evocative. They are designed to produce a visceral affect.

Above all, Kristeva claims that maternity is a painful experience. She says "one does not give birth in pain, one gives birth to pain: the child represents it and henceforth it settles in, it is continuous." (PK: 313) She says that mothers can ignore the pain "teach courses, run errands, tidy up the house, think about objects, subjects." (PK: 313) But, in her view, thinking about objects or subjects makes us shut out our inner life to become zombie-like. She aims to show that experience is not cut off from consciousness as Hegel and Lacan would have it. In 1993 she republishes *Women's Time*, an essay in which she argues that maternal experience demonstrates the fallibility of such theories. She asks what lies behind the "desire to be a mother." (OMS: 219)

Unable to answer this question, feminist ideology opens the door to a return of religion, which may serve to pacify anxiety, suffering and maternal expectations. Although we can only offer a partial adherence to Freud's belief that the desire to have a child is the desire to have a penis, and is thus a replacement for phallic and symbolic power, we must still pay close attention to what today's women have to say about this experience. Pregnancy is a dramatic ordeal: a splitting of the body, the division and coexistence of self and other, of nature and awareness, of physiology and speech. (219)

In her view, then, pregnancy is a model for showing that human consciousness is not clearly divided between subject and object, self and world. The dichotomies inherited from Hegel are not substantiated in pregnancy, especially when that domain places women outside the laws of

culture, giving them a substituted authority in the silent production of new life. She says

> Pregnancy is a sort of institutionalised, socialised and natural psychosis. The arrival on the child, on the other hand, guides the mother through a labyrinth of a rare experience: the love for another person, as opposed to love for herself, for a mirror image, or especially for another person with which the "I" becomes merged (through amorous or sexual passion). It is rather a slow, difficult, and delightful process of becoming attentive, tender, and self-effacing. If maternity is to be guilt-free, this journey needs to be undertaken without masochism and without annihilating one's affective, intellectual and professional personality either. In this way, maternity becomes a true *creative act*, something that we have not yet been able to imagine. (219-220)

The creative dimensions of maternity, and parenting in general cannot be understated. Even though Kristeva stands by a sexual distinction in her decisive use of the term "mother" she is gesturing towards a fully human potential. She says "the dichotomy between man and women as an opposition of two rival entities is *a problem for metaphysics.*" The problem is that one term in the dichotomous vision of consciousness is cast out, expelled from the ordering of a rational identity. Experience is too chaotic to find its place in the ordered world of reason. Experience is thus repressed, or silenced as "feminine." That which cannot be accepted as part of civilised culture is projected onto identities who are scapegoated as "other." The mother is one of these "others."

The idea that experience is outside the order of language, and can neither be expressed nor spoken, is a product of this scapegoating process. Authority is given to those who claim to have risen above the swamp of experience, whilst those who have experiences are not authoritative. The mistake is to think they are not authoritative because they *cannot* know and communicate

their experiences. Kristeva goes some way to show that this view is a mistake.

conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that psychoanalysis associates inner experiences with an infantile sexuality. These experiences are understood to be an immature version of consciousness which must be cut off and replaced with language. Kristeva does not contest the view that experiences are immature in her theory of the *chora*. She nevertheless contests the idea that early childhood is a purely natural consciousness which must become purely social. Her vision of maternal authority indicates that the child's experiences are socialised from the beginning of life.

Kristeva's theory of the thetic phase is an attempt to explain her hypothesis that experiences can be expressed in language. The theory claims that inner experiences are not fully sublated and that the remaining negativity is expressed by breaking the rules of language. But, I have argued, Kristeva fails to show that we have experiences - just in case we are zombies - because she falls back on the conception of an inner screen and homunculus. This effectively gives us a private inner space which is not one that easily explained as physical.

I have presented two empirical accounts of infant development to show that Kristeva's theory about conscious development is speculative and unproven. Gopnik argues that we do not have psychological experience as such until we develop a theory of other's psychological experience. Moreover, Karmiloff-Smith cites research that shows that infants recognise human faces and voices within hours of life. Her suggestion that certain conscious abilities are innate is similar to Kristeva's but she does not suggest

that the infant has awareness of its own awareness. This, at the end of the day, is the fundamental flaw in Kristeva's work. Being able to recognise the mothers face and respond to it is one thing, being aware of this awareness is another. Kristeva takes the second view, awareness of awareness. But having awareness of psychological experience requires a more developed theory of mind than is possible at the stages in which she argues the *chora* develops.

Kristeva is correct to say that mothers have experiences of which they are aware and about which they know. Her claim that poetic language is evocative serves to show this is the case. She is correct to give mothers epistemic authority, by showing that experiences can be described and expressed in language. This is the most productive aspect of her work even though the explanation as to how this is possible does not succeed to show how we know we are not zombies.

Chapter Four

Nancy Hartsock

Julia Kristeva claims that the physical differences between the sexes are not also psychological differences. She argues instead that consciousness is divided, in every human, between language and inner experiences. Kristeva argues that language is based in conventions and prescriptive norms, and that experiences are repressed because normative standards and practices deem these unproductive for social progress. She draws the psychoanalytic association between experience, desire and femininity to show that the mother's experiences are not situated in some primordial beyond – outside language and conventions. She argues that maternal experiences are expressed in non-conventional texts in order to show that experiences are part of social life.

Nancy Hartsock, on the other hand, claims that sexual difference is not only physical, but also psychological difference. She argues that women are more adept at practical thinking, and at building interpersonal relationships whereas men's fundamental individualism prepares them well for inferential knowledge. Hartsock adds that men are unable to relate well with others and often become violent and abusive towards women and other men. Like Kristeva, Hartsock associates normative social conventions with masculinity, but unlike Kristeva Hartsock assumes some kind of universal essence in the male psyche. Hartsock's claims about motherhood and femininity also presuppose a universal essence in the female psyche which is opposed to and distinct from men. The essentialism is taken by Hartsock as

an "empirical foundation" in her proposal of a "feminist standpoint epistemology."

Hartsock draws upon Marxian theory to claim that women have an epistemic privilege. She argues that women's knowledge is "materialist," and thus more authentic than men's "dualist" knowledge. But her claims of materialism and dualism are not an inquiry into human nature and the relationship between self and world, being instead an *epistemological* dualism between appearance and reality. Hartsock claims that, from a Marxian standpoint, the concrete experiences which characterize women's knowledge make that knowledge more authentic. Men's dualist knowledge, she argues, is based in normative agreement about exchange values. So, in Hartsock's view, men's knowledge is based in appearance and women have the opportunity to see things as they really are.

Hartsock argues that the subordination of women to men in the hetero-sexual division of labour gives women a special point of view on social relations. The epistemic privilege of women exposes the normative values of a heterosexual division of labour as both false and perverse. Women's knowledge is more attuned to others because the distinction between self and other is not well defined for females. Or, to put it in Hegel's terms, women have intuitive knowledge in which they do not properly identify as particular individuals. Either way, this conception of femininity focuses women towards others, she argues, rather than themselves, giving them a universal perspective on lived reality. What this consciousness lacks, however, is the ability to develop complex concepts about the world and their place within it. Moreover, this universal consciousness lacks the capacity to explain differences between women.

The key theorists which inform Hartsock's vision of a specifically feminist materialism are Karl Marx and Nancy Chodorow. Marx gives Hartsock's theory the framework for epistemic privilege. I will dwell more on Marxian theory in chapter five, where I examine Hartsock's vision of masculine knowledge. Here I am most concerned with how feminine knowledge is cashed out. Hartsock claims that Chodorow provides an "empirical foundation" for understanding gender differences as pre-conceptual knowledge of themselves in relation to the world. Hartsock accepts Chodorow's claim for epistemological differences between the sexes as supporting the development of a specifically "feminist" standpoint. The standpoint enables women to see that they are oppressed by men and to work together to remove male bias from social institutions. Most particularly, Hartsock sees that women are oppressed as mothers in the sexual division of labour, so the family is a good starting point for change.

The work of Hartsock and Chodorow might appear outdated. Even though Chodorow has contributed immensely to our understanding of gender, and to feminist ethics there are also problems with Chodorow's theory which are widely addressed.[44] The same could be said about Hartsock's theory, even though standpoint theories are taken up to challenge sexual bias in scientific research.[45] Specifically, standpoint theories argue for a version of epistemic

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[44] See for instance, See Gilligan (1986). Gilligan's "ethics of care" takes Chodorow's claims about gender as a premise for feminist ethics. But Elizabeth Spelman (1988) is among those who are critical of the problem of making female experience universal from the perspective of women with a white middle class background. For criticism see also Young (1990).

[45] See Donna Haraway (1991) and Sandra Harding (1993).

privilege from which feminists can claim epistemic authority.[46] I have already shown, in chapter two, that epistemic privilege does not confer authority.

In section one I review Hartsock's claims about the sexual division of labour in which maternal work is undervalued. She argues further that female experiences, like pregnancy, give women special knowledge. She claims that these insights support Chodorow's theory of femininity. In section two I will present Hartsock's revision of standpoint theory before turning, in section three, to Elizabeth Spelman's critique of Chodorow. Spelman shows that universal claims about sexism fail to address differences between women, especially those arising in racist or classist contexts. Spelman draws our attention to the fact that normative values must be contextualized accordingly. Spelman's comments bring to light the role of normativity in developing knowledge. This, I argue, supports Sellars' vision of epistemic authority. Finally I show that Hegel's vision of intuitive knowledge is similar to Hartsock's claims about feminine knowledge.

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[46] Janack (1997). Janack warns that arguing for epistemic privilege is not the way to gain epistemic authority. "Rather than trying to reconstruct the concept of an epistemically advantageous standpoint, those of us who believe the aims of a feminist standpoint theory are valuable need to concentrate on demystifying the process by which epistemic authority is actually conferred. That means unmasking the Enlightenment claim that epistemic authority derives from an epistemically privileged standpoint or position rather than buying into it." (1997:135)

i. the sexual division of labour

Nearly two decades have passed since Hartsock published her essay about the feminist standpoint. In this time, the sexual division of labour has changed to some extent. More men participating in child rearing, for instance. Some credit for the change can be offered to Hartsock, Chodorow and others who hold similar positions, as feminists. But the economic rewards for those who rear children remain substandard as capitalism is driving the global economy. Hartsock blames men for capitalism and for running gender biased institutions which are oppressive to women. Hartsock locates the nuclear family as the foundation of gender bias, claiming that "compulsory heterosexuality"[47] structures society so that men participate in public life and women look after things at home. The fact that women bear children is taken as grounds for their extra responsibilities in child rearing. Men, at least in her culture and at the time of writing the essay, were almost universally not responsible for caring for the kids. Child rearing is not necessarily women's work, in the sense that child bearing is necessarily women's work. So the very idea that women ought to raise children is a "societal choice" in Hartsock's view.

Still, having no say in public life indicates that men make this choice and impose it upon women. This normative vision of sexual difference gives rise to opposing work practices whereby males have roles in powerful institutions which define social structures whilst women toil at home. Hartsock does not deny that women also participate in paid work outside the home, but notes

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[47] See Adriennne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Continuum" in Rich (1986) for a detailed discussion of the heterosexual structure of Western societies. Judith Butler (1990) also critically assesses "compulsory heterosexuality".

that even if that is the case, women end up working a double day: they work both outside the home and come home to more work while their male partners take time out. In short, Hartsock argues that women are oppressed in the sexual division of labour because their work is a "labour of love."

Hartsock turns to Marx in the hope of finding a strategy to liberate women. She complains that the Marxian account of a division of labour does not adequately address the sexual division of labour. She says that even Marx wonders how the household economy would run if women joined the labour force. Who would care for the children, cook, mend, wash clothes, clean the house, and so on? But, perhaps not surprisingly, Marx does not see that women's work is oppressive. The influence of Hegel on Marx cannot be understated. Hegel, of course, thinks that women are unable to do anything but tend to others from birth to death.

Arguing that women do most of the domestic work, Hartsock draws a parallel between women's work and the manual labour of workers in the public sphere. She says that maternal work, like manual labour, "involves a unification of mind and body for the purpose of transforming natural substances into socially defined goods." (223) She claims that Marx takes the unification of mind and body to be an essential feature of the epistemic privilege he ascribes to workers. She sets out to show that the burden of women's work also involves this unification of mind and body. But, given that women are not only involved in production, but also reproduction of the species, Hartsock claims that the unification of mind and body will be more extreme than it is for those who produce commodities. The repetitious nature of work also contributes to unification of mind and body, so Hartsock claims repetition has a special place in women's work. (223) The sensuous nature of women's work is emphasised by Hartsock because of Marx's view

that sensuous activity leads to a materialist standpoint. The idea is that the materialism is dialectical, so that the mind and body are integrated in a system of equal value. Hartsock is rallying against the type of epistemic privilege attributed to purely mental labour as a consequence of Cartesian dualism. She says

> the vantage point available to women on the basis of their contribution to subsistence represents an intensification and deepening of the materialist world view and consciousness available to the producers of commodities in capitalism, an intensification of class consciousness. (224)

Hartsock argues that women's contribution to subsistence, repetitive though it is, gives even "non-working-class women" access to the dialectical consciousness of the standpoint. The dialectical consciousness takes the focus back onto the sensuous experiences of the body, valuing the experiences as important for their own sake rather than as important just in terms of what is produced. The capitalist system values labour quantitatively, in terms of how much is produced and how much money can be made. But the Marxian alternative suggests the labour has its own intrinsic value, which ought not to be alienated from the labouring body. Labouring for subsistence, producing things for one's own use and cherishing the effort going into the labour is taken to be a materialist alternative to the abstract values of the capitalist labour market. The epistemic standpoint comes through focusing on the labouring body and claiming the products for oneself, rather than focusing on exchange values.

Hartsock says producing children, over and above working for subsistence, "is far more complex than the instrumental working with others to transform objects." Maternal work entails a unity with nature; a special bond with other mothers; and a unity of mind and body which men cannot

comprehend, in Hartsock's view. Her point is that domestic work and child rearing is labour intensive work in which mothers are fully involved in the processes of their labour rather than on productive outcomes. Subsistence comprises the cooking and general maintenance of domestic work. So Hartsock takes it that mothers are even better suited to the materialist knowledge of sensuous labour than the workers described by Marx.

But mothering work is not all that gives women the opportunity to value their work for its own sake - which is what they have to do anyway. Mothers are not waged, even if they are supported financially and are thus dependent on their spouses. So claiming that mothering work is manual labour is really only repeating what Marx says about women anyway. But Hartsock adds several other threads to her argument. First she claims that the female body has some special features which also suggest that they have some version of embodied knowledge. The female body makes women more attuned to relationships with others, she says, and the experiences of "[m]enstruation, coitus, pregnancy, lactation – all represent challenges to bodily boundaries." She is not particularly clear about how these bodily boundary challenges are epistemologically significant, citing Adrienne Rich's claims about self and other blurring in pregnancy.[48] (225) The experience of living in a female body is another important reason for women's special knowledge, in Hartsock's view. The lack of clarity between self and other in the experiences of pregnancy supports Hartsock's turn to Chodorow[49], who argues that feminine knowledge is more relational than masculine knowledge.

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[48] See chapter two for my discussion of pregnancy and the indistinct self/other.

[49] Hartsock also cites Jane Flax's contribution to the "object-relations" theory of gender.

The specific class of psychoanalysis to which Chodorow subscribes is called "object relations" theory.[50] Object relations theory presents a pre-oedipal account of gender difference. According to this theory, girls take longer to separate from their mothers than boys. Chodorow claims this is partly explained by the fact that mothers push their sons away earlier than their daughters. As a result, she argues girls take longer to get a sense of themselves as separate individuals. Both mothers and daughters are bound up in a sense of oneness, according to Hartsock's version of the theory. (226)

Hartsock says that the oedipal crisis is more cleanly resolved for boys than for girls, who "retain both parents as love objects." (226)

> The nature of the crisis itself differs by sex: the boy's love for the mother is an extension of mother-infant unity and thus essentially threatening to his ego and independence. Male ego-formation necessarily requires repressing this first relation and negating the mother. (226)

The incest taboo, discussed in the previous chapter, makes the boy feel especially guilty. He must repress any desire for the mother and identify with his father. But recognition of his difference from her requires that he "negates" her. Boys "must identify with an abstract, cultural stereotype and learn abstract behaviours not attached to a well-known person. Masculinity is idealized by boys..." (226) Assuming the father is employed in the work-force, away from home, the boy therefore develops a very abstracted vision of him. He must learn about an absent figure in order to understand his own place in the social order.

Girls, on the other hand, ease their way out of the maternal bond because they are constantly in her presence. Assuming the mother is not also engaged

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[50] See her (1978) and (1994).

in paid work outside the home, the girls "can identify with a concrete example present in daily life." (226) As Hartsock puts it:

> Chodorow concludes that girls' gradual emergence from the oedipal period takes place in such a way that empathy is built into their primary definition of self, and they have a variety of capacities for experiencing another's needs or feelings as their own. Put another way girls, because of female parenting, are less differentiated from others than boys, more continuous with and related to the external object world. (226)

According to Chodorow, then, girls have an advantage insofar as they learn by experience, rather than having to use abstract concepts to identify with an absent role model. The girl must identify with the mother, on the basis that they are the same sex, and through this identification, the girl learns her role as a would-be mother-housekeeper-cook-etc. Moreover, the presence of the mother gives girls a special ability to develop empathy. Hartsock puts it like this:

> Girls learn roles from watching their mothers; boys must learn roles from rules which structure the life of an absent male figure. Girls can identify with a concrete example present in daily life; boys must identify with an abstract set of maxims only occasionally present in the form of the father. Thus, not only do girls learn roles with more interpersonal and relational skills, but the process of role learning itself is embodied in the concrete relation with the mother. The male in contrast, must identify with an abstract, cultural stereotype and learn abstract behaviours not attached to a well-known person. Masculinity is idealized by boys whereas femininity is concrete for girls. (226)

Girls and boys have different ways of constructing an identity, based on the absence or presence of the same sex parent, in Hartsock's view. This amounts to two fundamentally different modes of knowing. Girls come to know their roles through "watching" while boys come to know theirs by learning "rules" and "maxims." Girls learn through interpersonal relations, in contact with

others; whereas boys learns by thinking about someone who is absent. The mother, in this scenario is ever present and well-known to the children, but the boy rejects her through the oedipal complex of psychoanalytic theory. The father, on the other hand, is seldom present in the home and thus not well-known.

The empirical truth about the presence and absence of children to the parents notwithstanding, the real issue here is that there are two fundamentally different ways of learning. On one hand there is learning by experience through concrete relationships and by just being present. This, according to Hartsock, is how girls learn. On the other hand, there is learning by abstract maxims, and by rules. This is how boys learn, in her view. These different modes of learning, and thus of knowing, are a crucial of Hartsock's standpoint epistemology. She claims that each sex acquires a different type of knowledge.[51]

My concern is to show that Hartsock's feminist epistemology depends upon there being different sorts of knowing. Feminist knowledge, as she puts it, is grounded in experience through identifying with a female parent and learning to be a female through osmosis. Hartsock does not make explicit

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[51] Implicit in this argument is the idea that girls and boys know what sex they are before they know anything else. For, how else would the girl be able to identify with the mother; or the boy be able to reject the mother? Drawing from psychoanalysis, this theory centres around the idea that the mother and child are engaged in an "incestuous" relationship. The boy needs to notice that he has a penis and that the mother does not. He then must think that the mother is castrated and, out of fear that he too will be castrated by the father who wants her for his love object, the boy must turn to the father to learn language. The girl on the other hand notices that she is already castrated, in which case there is no great rush to move out of the maternal dyad.

that the female will not learn anything through experience without also having language. But it is crucial to note that her sexual division of labour depends on the idea that females and males have fundamentally opposed ways of learning: by concrete experience or by abstract maxims. Female knowledge is based in sensuous experience and male knowledge is abstract, which is precisely what Hegel says. I will turn to Hegel later. First I will set out Hartsock's claims for a feminist standpoint.

ii Hartsock's vision of a standpoint

Hartsock offers this account of the relevance of standpoint knowledge to "allow for a much more profound critique of phallocratic ideologies and institutions than has yet been achieved." (221) Relying on Marx's analysis of the dehumanisation of the worker in the economy of exchange, Hartsock claims that subsistence is devalued. The valuation of subsistence is nevertheless normative rather than merely descriptive, suggesting it is a good place to start the investigation. Women, she argues, contribute more to subsistence than men allowing them a potential materialist epistemology. This materialist epistemology is supposed to help women see how capitalist values are false and to find ways to challenge these values. Hartsock argues that, in the sexual division of labour, the woman is closer to "material necessity". Both women and men, she argues, are privy to the real human requirements necessarily observed in subsistence. But women's maternal duties makes their knowledge more materialist than men's knowledge precisely because women's work consumes their whole life. Women are responsible for the subsistence of the species. Hence, she argues, women's lives are more concerned with quality than quantity. If women were to focus

on the qualitative, rather than quantitative, aspects of reproduction, Hartsock claims that they would see things as they really are.

Hartsock says that a standpoint is not just a position, or perspective of one group. Instead, a standpoint requires an engagement, or interaction between two groups. In Marxian theory, the groups are divided by class. There are the members of the bourgeois who own the capital; and there are the members of the proletariat who perform manual labour. Each class depends upon the other: the bourgeois have the capital and the proletariat have the means of production. But each is complicit with a system within which the bourgeois benefit more than the proletariat.

Hartsock begins her discussion of a standpoint with five Marxian criteria. First, material life, or class position, both structures and limits understanding. We adopt the belief system of the class into which we are born. That belief system is nevertheless limited by virtue of its class specificity. Moreover, each class position is epistemologically distinct from every other class position. So, those who are born into a working class family will develop the belief system of that class. The belief system of the working class is ingrained with various normative standards and practices which differ from those of the capitalist class. The belief systems of the respective groups are limited accordingly so that they have differing normative perspectives. This suggests that there are some things about being a member of the proletariat that the bourgeois cannot understand. And vice versa.

Second, with respect to a standpoint, Hartsock claims that

> [i]f material life is structured in fundamentally opposing ways for two different groups, one can expect that the vision of each will represent an inversion of the other, and in systems of domination the vision available to the rulers will be both partial and perverse (218).

To understand such a claim, we need to think of a fundamental opposition. In her view, this opposition exists between genders. As we have already seen, she conceives of gender as Chodorow does, whereby girls lack the definitive sense of self that boys have. The normative standards learned by girls encourages them to learn by experience and to consider other people. Girls do not have such a well defined sense of themselves as selves because they experience themselves in relation to their mothers. The distinction between self and other, or self and mother is less clear for girls than for boys. Chodorow argues that the mother's identification with the same sex child is reciprocated by the girl. Boys, on the other hand, see themselves as fundamentally different from their mothers, partly because their mothers treat them differently. Boys, in this story, develop a much clearer sense of difference between self and other, or self and mother. But identifying with the same sex parent is more difficult for boys, in this story, because fathers are largely absent from the home and rarely if ever contribute to child caring practices. The boy has to develop inferential, or "abstract" knowledge, so that he can imagine the public domain in which his future will develop. The standard for boys is quite the opposite: they learn to put themselves first so that experience is not important to them.[52]

In Hartsock's view, boys lack the normative resources to learn by experiences, on this view, and a sense of superiority is built into their ability to abstract themselves from the daily grind. How this sense of superiority is implicit in the dominant groups' consciousness will be addressed in the next section. But the fact that members of the dominant group are unable to focus

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[52] See Doane, J. and Hodges, D. (1992). They argue that Winnicott's account of "good enough" mothering assumes the above mentioned sexual division of labour which is taken up by Chodorow.

on experiences and interpersonal relationships is taken to render their standpoint partial and perverse. I will have much more to say about the partiality and perversity of masculinity, as Hartsock puts it, in the following chapter.

Third, Hartsock argues, the dominant group structures "material relations in which all parties are forced to participate." The ruling group forces everyone to work according to their standards. But the very fact that the other group participate by abiding by standards set by the ruling group suggests that the standards are not simply wrong. The normative standards and practices which inform institutions are accepted by everyone and "cannot be dismissed as simply false." (218) The family is one of these institutions, so family structure must have something going for it. That oppression exists means, for Hartsock, that empirically real relations between men and women cannot simply be deemed non-existent, even though the details of these relations really are contingent. The oppressed group is complicit within the overall dynamic relations of domination and subordination.

This leads to Hartsock's fourth point with respect to a standpoint. The oppressed group can gain a broader insight into the overall structure to achieve a more accurate vision of social relations. The nature of women's work brings them closer to nature and more in contact with reality so, even though they are blinded by normative discourse, they have the opportunity to see that the standards and practices do not reflect the way things really are.

Women have grown accustomed to working under conditions which do not ultimately suit them. In Hartsock's view, seeing the false standards which inform these conditions entails struggle. The dominant men will not be keen to change standards which ultimately favour themselves as men over women, so it will not be easy to change the standards. Hartsock claims

that research, investigation and education are necessary to change the situation. (218)

A fifth and final characteristic of the knowledge gained from the standpoint "exposes the real relations among human beings as inhuman, points beyond the present and carries a historically libratory role." (218) The enlightened women's research and the education of women based in this research enables more women to see that women's work is unjust and that their relationship with men is inhuman. In other words, this process prepares feminists for the work to be undertaken towards making right an unjust situation.

Hartsock raises the idea of a "dual vision" in which both sides of the dichotomy can be seen. This would entail seeing things from a perspective which integrates experience into abstract knowledge. The fact that women have had to learn the normative standards set by men gives them advantage of having this dual perspective. Men's vision, on the other hand, is taken to be more restricted, disposing of the importance of having experiences. Their vision is partial because men focus on abstract values rather than sensuous processes. I will explain this in more detail in chapter five. For now, it is important to get a handle on Hartsock's vision of feminine knowledge.

She argues that the complete vision is structured through "*both* social relations *and* relations to the world of nature." (219) Women must have a grasp of the concepts which inform social relations whilst also having their special place within those relations which bring them closer to nature. She characterises women's knowledge as a dialectical integration of "human and natural worlds, mind and body, ideal and material, and the cooperation of self and other (community)." (220) Hartsock argues that the feminist standpoint gives women the potential to see beyond the normative structures in which

they are situated as subordinate. In particular, she is interested in the standards by which only the production of goods and knowledge is valued in the system of exchange, so that women's reproductive work is taken for granted.

Returning to the characteristics of knowledge determined by standpoint, Hartsock identifies a series of "opposed and hierarchical dualities" in which knowledge (mind, ideas, society and self-interest) is raised in value over the above mentioned terms they oppose in experience (body, material, nature and community). She recommends a dialectical integration of these terms rather than the duality in which terms associated with experience are given secondary status. Hartsock makes it clear that women are not valued as subjects in their own right who depend upon properly objective knowledge to perform their domestic and parenting labour.

Hartsock orders the two ways of seeing in terms of "levels of reality." (218) In her analysis, men are biased towards the way things appear, engaging with reality through merely normative structures, whereas women are closer to seeing things as they are. She cites Marx to support her claim that "reality itself consists of 'sensuous human activity, practice.'" (218) Hartsock says that the real point of life and work is the continuation of the species. Production thus stands up as more important than exchange. The perversity of class hierarchy is marked in the emphasis on exchange and abstract values of commodities. The duality of appearance and reality to which Hartsock refers is a duality between a normative, or prescriptive view of society and a descriptive view based on experience of reality. Normativity tells us how we ought to see things whilst the descriptive vision tells us how things are. The normative bias is based upon the prejudices of men who control the social institutions of society. Observations of experience outside these normative

constraints apparently can show us how things are. So, Hartsock motivates a dichotomy between appearance/reality to claim that social conventions are only normative and thus based in appearances whereas careful descriptions of subsistence are more authentic. Note for now, however, that the distinction between appearance and reality, as normative versus descriptive knowledge is misleading us into thinking that anything can be described without appeal to normativity. I will explain in more detail later.

The second aspect of Hartsock's standpoint, in which we see the two groups as inversions of each other, brings to light the partiality of the dominant group. Normative knowledge endorses relations of domination and subordination to which even women are blinded. Careful observation and description of experiences thus carries the potential to see things as they really are: "partial and perverse."

The third criterion states that the fact that both parties are complicit shows that normativity is not simply false. But normativity is nevertheless partial, because men benefit and women do not when it comes to the sexual division of labour. It may well be the case that many women do rear children, and that some feel that their place *is* in the home, but their understanding of maternity is informed by knowledge that describes how things work according to current prescriptions. The fact that some women believe this is really how things ought to be shows how perverse normativity can be.

Understanding inequality requires knowledge that challenges normativity. But how can we tell when something is not merely descriptive, but is also fundamentally prescriptive? So, as the fourth criterion states, it will not be easy to investigate without struggle. The subordinate group already has access to knowledge but the knowledge they have is insufficient. More research and education is required. Once developed, the standpoint meets criterion

number five by admitting progress beyond the relations of subordination and domination.

One cannot outright dismiss Hartsock's ideal society, in which quality is more important than quantity and in which maternal work carries the value now given to high ranking executives. Nailing normativity as a cause of women's oppression is a good start. But there are some rather large problems with the theory. The first I will deal with drives to the heart of gender claims, in particular those Hartsock takes from Chodorow. In the last decade or so gender is seen to be in trouble.[53] The category "women" is now thought to be too general and universal to deal the power relations it sets out to explain. To show why it is no longer appropriate to make claims on behalf of all women, I shall turn to Elizabeth Spelman's account of "Inessential Woman." I will deal in more detail with Hartsock's specifically Marxist claims in chapter five where I focus on her account of masculinity.

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[53] Spelman's (1988) is an influential text in this context. Linda Nicholson (1994) says "a problem that many commentators have pointed out, is that "a feminism of difference" tends to be "a feminism of uniformity." To say that "women are different from men in such and such way" is to say that women *are* "such and such." But inevitably characterizations of women's "nature" or "essence" - even if this is described as a socially constructed nature or essence - tend to reflect the perspective of those making the characterizations." (1994:94) Most commonly, she argues like Spelman, that the perspective from which all women are characterized is white, middle class and heterosexual. See also Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble.* (1990) which destabilizes gender and sex. Butler argues that like gender, sex is something which comes into being only when we define it as such. She claims that the binary sex system is defined in a framework of "compulsory heterosexuality" which denies other sexualities, on the one hand, and "aberrant" biological sexes in cases of hermaphroditism.

iii Spelman on Chodorow

Although Spelman does not directly address Hartsock's work, I take her claims about Chodorow to apply equally well to feminist standpoint theory. In short, Spelman challenges Chodorow's claims about gender identity. First, she indicates that Chodorow "takes sexism to be independent of classism and racism to be the model for them ... and the cause of them." (85) Sexism, classism and racism are all forms of oppression. But Chodorow's story about gender claims that a sense of superiority is decidedly male. Male superiority is taken as a model for a sense of superiority in cases of racism and classism. Spelman shows that this notion of maleness as superiority does not explain cases in which white women, for example, take themselves to be superior to persons of either sex who are not white. Sexism cannot be taken as a cause for other types of oppression, she argues, but nor can sexism be taken as a primary oppression upon which other types of oppression are modelled. Do we identify primarily as one or another gender, secondly as being from a particular race and third a particular class? Part of the problem identified by Spelman is that white women are often blind to the fact that we are from a particular race. This blindness exemplifies our blindness to racial oppression.

As Spelman argues, Chodorow's universal claim about the sexual division of labour is grounded in the idea that there are two groups of people who are fundamentally different on the basis of sex. This claim does not deny that biological difference is important for distinguishing between the two groups. But Chodorow's claim moves beyond the idea of biological difference as being foremost in oppression, to the idea that females and males are subject to different social roles. The oppressive factor is social, in Chodorow's analysis, but the social factor is the universal. In other words, the universal fact Chodorow identifies in the sexual division of labour is the oppression of

women as women. Moreover, the oppression of women as women fuels the oppression of women as mothers. Therefore, the universal claim is that all women are oppressed as both women and as mothers *in relation to men.*

Spelman makes clear that Chodorow's universal claims mask other differences such as those between class and race. Chodorow's universal claim is that all women are oppressed by all men in a sexual division of labour. Spelman contests that oppression is more widespread than such an analysis permits. Oppression exists in relations between White and Black, for instance, or between middle class and working class. Spelman argues that Chodorow's claim is "something like this: In all invidious hierarchies, those in the more powerful position regard those in the less powerful position as Other, as object, as thing." (90) Sexism is thus taken to produce other sorts of oppression. But, as Spelman makes clear, claims about sexism do not easily map onto claims about racism or classism. To begin with, white men are the oppressors of non-white men, suggesting that "all men are superior as men to all women and that some men are superior to other men (and women), not as men, but as members of a particular race." (91) But, Spelman says, this is further complicated by the fact that some women are like some men, and "not so Other after all." The claim that all women are subordinated to men systematically is undermined in situations where, for instance, a white woman is in a dominant position to a black man. How does one set of hierarchical relations (gender) get translated into another (class, race)? Most salient is the fact that racism or classism highlights that both women and men of an underprivileged group share that oppression. The gender relations identified in the sexual division of labour as fundamental to oppression thus lose their significance.

Spelman charges Chodorow with making two universal claims: "a sexual division of labour and, within that division, the assignment of mothering to women." (87) Spelman argues that there is no such universal category as "woman" and there is no such thing as a generic woman. A generic woman does not suffer bad breath, for instance, because she does not have the luxury of breathing. (187) Generic woman is a fictional category which glosses over the situated differences of real live women. That women are universally mothers is equally dubious. It is neither true that all women are mothers, nor that all care giving is performed by women. The idea of a generic mother is as contentious as the idea of a generic woman.

The Australian Institute of Family studies found that by 1990, only thirty-five percent of heterosexual "couples with children" send the father off to earn a living while the mother stays at home to care for the kids.[54] Indeed, the increasing participation of heterosexual men as hands on, or even "pregnant," fathers leads to new interest in how much housework men really do.[55] So Chodorow's universal claims are made on very shaky ground. When tempted to ask what happens to boys when their father stays at home, her theory about abstract masculinity flies in the face of all the evidence.

A second problem with Chodorow's argument, identified by Spelman, is that the gender implications are overshadowed in the attempt to explain

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[54] Cited by Gilding (1994). Gilding produces statistical evidence that gender roles have changed over the past forty years. He argues that the roles are constituted by ideology. From a view of "liberal optimism" Gilding says "the 'new man' or 'new father' is both the cutting edge of a growing phenomena and a role model. Similarly, the 'partnership family' represents the authentic aspirations of most men and women." (1994: 208-209)

[55] See Baxter, Gibson & Lynch-Blosse (1990); Gilding (1994).

racism or classism because it turns out to look as though asymmetric parenting relations give everyone the desire to dominate if possible. The asymmetry can be viewed as causing everyone: boys and girls, whites and Blacks, rich and poor to be "psychologically prepared to treat everybody else as Other, and it is simply a historical accident that men happen to dominate women, whites happen to dominate Blacks." (Spelman 1988: 93) In other words, it is not clear from the recognition that oppression exists that asymmetric parenting is the cause of any particular type of oppression; nor that it adequately explains who oppresses who. Those who are oppressed in one set of relations can just as easily become the oppressor in others.

Spelman cites the racism and classism of some women towards others as the third difficulty of Chodorow's account. The psychological preparation of girls described in object-relations theory does not explain how women could oppress anyone, let alone other women. The claim that girls' psychological development prepares them to be oppressed, not oppressors, does not explain how women can take others to be their subordinates. Spelman indicates that Chodorow's account of subordination and domination through asymmetric parenting arrangements serves only to mask women's superiority in some situations.

Ien Ang sums up the situation of whiteness in Australia as follows:

> Australia is implicated in the global configuration of white/Western hegemony in ways which are particular to its history - of European settlement and Aboriginal genocide, of the White Australia policy, official multiculturalism, and the current 'push toward Asia'. Despite this, Australia remains predominantly populated by Anglo-Celtic people, who inhabit exnominated whiteness in this country. Its main social institutions and basic cultural orientations are identifiably Western, and as a nation it is categorised in the international order as a part of 'the West.' (Ang 1995: 69)

Ang argues the hegemonic ordering of Australians is not simply resolved by means of "tolerance" because there are some aspects of difference which cannot be assimilated. The idea is not favouring one side or the other of a binary structure, in Ang's view, nor is it necessarily resolved by "postmodern optimism." The Australian situation is sharpened by, as Ang puts it, "non-dialogue between the postcolonial and the multicultural problematic, the serial juxtapositioning of the two conditional entirely upon the distributive power of the hegemonic Anglo centre." (1995:71) Ang cites Spelman's insight into the problem of a politics of inclusion: the person who invites someone to participate already has a privileged status. It is not clear, then, how Hartsock's epistemic privilege benefits *all* women.

Importantly Spelman shows that the founding epistemological claim in Chodorow's theory of masculine identity is holding a belief in *male* superiority. I agree with Spelman that this belief is a "a fairly sophisticated notion to be packed into a preconscious sense of oneself." (1988:96) As Spelman says, learning about gender entails learning about the gender hierarchy, not by having some prelinguistic beliefs. Once we learn about the gender hierarchy we are left wondering about women's complicity within the hierarchy of gender. Chodorow's claims do not emphasise the requirement to learn about gender, celebrating instead some putative vision of gender identity without conscious content. Moreover, Spelman argues, Chodorow uses the idea of consciousness without content to explain the subordination and domination of gender relations. (1988:97)

Clearly, consciousness without content is explanatorily impotent. Or worse, conscious experience which entails knowing that one is male; and knowing that one is superior begs the question as to how they know unless we are prepared to say this is some kind of genetic knowledge. This being the

case, the whole argument couched in terms of gender loses its force. What we have instead is essential sexual difference by which males and females have different kinds of conscious experiences that we know as being of one sex or the other.

Spelman argues that part of Chodorow's explanation entails that femininity has a built in component of relational aptitude (caring for others) and masculinity has a built in component of self-sufficiency (separation from and therefore superiority over women).

> But - to repeat a point made several times above - if what children learn in acquiring gender identity is rich enough to explain how they are so psychically ready to assume their place in a hierarchical world, how can it not include an understanding of gender identity appropriate for one's race, class, ethnic group? For I learn that my place in the established hierarchies of the social world is not determined by whether I am male or female but by whether I am white or Black, rich or poor. (1988:97)

Spelman makes clear that universal claims about women as women do not stand up. White women are often blind to the fact that we are coloured and belong to a particular race.

As Ang argues, everyone who is not white is labelled "other." The term refers to such disparate categories as 'black women,' 'Third World women,' Indigenous women,' and 'women of colour.' (1995:66)

> In structural terms, however, they occupy the same space insofar as they are all, from a white perspective, relegated to the realm of racialised or ethnicised 'otherness,' a normalising mechanism which is precisely constitutive of white/Western hegemony. As we have seen, feminism in Australia and elsewhere is not exempt from such hegemonising processes: in most feminist theory, too, whiteness is the unmarked norm against which all 'others' have to be specified in order to be represented. (1995: 66)

Taking our whiteness as "the unmarked norm," white feminists risk positioning ourselves as subjects who do have the status which marks privilege and is confused with authority. White feminists risk taking the privileged status of a subject in relation to a less privileged "other," who is reduced to the position of silence: the object in a text.

Aileen Moreton Robinson argues that "feminist anthropologists" become the source of Aboriginal women's authenticity whilst simultaneously women "remain objects marginalised within the text. The literature is written about them, not by them, for them or with them." (1998: 279) In Moreton Robinson's view, the authentication of Aboriginal women which brings about their objectification is made possible by a "White women's movement because of the concern with whether or not women's oppression is universal." But, she argues, the irony is evident in the very standards imposed on the research which suggests that women's oppression is not universal. Moreton Robinson claims that the researchers make a distinction, within which to couch their research, between "traditional" and "contemporary" Aborigines. The object of research loses its singularity as such.

In her own attempt to understand Aboriginal women's subjectivity, Moreton-Robinson looks to narratives which define Aboriginal cultures. She says

> In each of the narratives Aboriginal people are connected either by descent, country, place or shared experiences (1998:131).

These relations are personal in nature and are intrinsic to Aboriginal women's subjectivities in negotiating Aboriginal and White cultural domains. In Aboriginal cultural domains relationality is therefore never

based upon the tolerance of others but the experience of the self as part of the others. (1998:279)

Stories are a source of knowledge for Aborigines and for anyone who wants to know more about them. The idea of privilege, in the guise of tolerance, is not a foundation for knowing anything about the lives of aborigines. But, by the same token, the authority of the white anthropologist women is not undermined just by claiming that the privilege is unfounded. Aboriginal narratives carry epistemic authority which does not replace but, in a general sense, adds to the authority of the white feminist researchers.

If Hartsock were correct about epistemic privilege, the Aboriginal narratives would carry greater epistemic authority than research. The authority shifts from the objective perspective to the subjective perspective. But the binary is itself problematic insofar as all knowledge is infected with standards and practices of the observer. The anthropologist is granted expertise by her community because she understands the standards by which her research is collated. Similarly the Aboriginal women are granted expertise by their communities because they abide by prescribed standards.

The narratives of Aboriginal women reveal that they are embodied, and embedded in a network of social relationships and Aboriginal domains. The body for Aboriginal women is the link to people, country, spirits, herstory and the future and is a positive site of value and affirmation as well as a site of resistance. As keepers of the family, Aboriginal women are the bearers of subjugated knowledges. (285)

Clearly, Aboriginal women have epistemic authority in their community which white women, as a group, claim to lack in our own. Moreton Robinson reports narrative evidence of widespread "distance, unease, racial superiority and often cruelty" from white women. Perhaps those of us who

sustain the hegemony could recognise Aboriginal peoples' tolerance towards us as indicative of the status which could be afforded to communitarian knowledge practices. Each member of that community has authority to speak on their own terms. The visibility of differences between women shatters any ideological structure which tells us our place in the order of things, and what we ought to aspire to.

Spelman says that in one sense we cannot deny that "all women are women." But in another important sense, feminism has invented its own category, "gender" which obscures the differences between women. It is false to assume all other women are like ourselves. Such an assumption stops women from taking differences into consideration, and from asking others how their experiences are different from our own, both as groups with which we identify and as individuals.

For example, Spelman points out that Chodorow characterises women as being intrinsically caring, as though women never experience rage, jealousy or other conflictual emotions. This glosses over conflicts between women as much as it denies the reality of any person's humanity. The point made by Spelman is that Chodorow appears to base all affective relations upon the mother/child relationship, as though that relationship is "free of fear, anger, pride or jealousy." (1988:108) One only needs to read Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* to recall that some mothers kill their children. More frequently though, parenting raises emotions some people might claim not to have previously understood. Equally troubling is Chodorow's denial of male emotion. Spelman puts it that "the public world (or sphere) of work is teeming with affect - whether it be boredom, pride, anger, jealousy, hope, contempt or fear." (1988:108) And, Thomas Lacqueur makes clear that fathers

are hardly free from the affective roller coaster of parenting.[56] Chodorow sets aside (conveniently) the sorts of affect which do not support her thesis about girls' ingrained connectedness to everyone else, and, especially to each other. Spelman, on the other hand, makes clear that issues of racism and classism highlight that this idea of universal connectedness between women is imaginary.

It is important to emphasise that we learn about gender, race, class and other factors of our own identity when we learn a language. These are normative facts which comprise the standards by which we learn to make observations. If we grow up in a community in which we are oppressed racially, for instance, we are more likely to know about oppression than if we grow up white in a white community where racial oppression does not touch our lives. Learning about oppression is like learning about anything else: we need to be taught. Whether that happens because we are treated badly by others for no apparent reason, or whether that happens in a classroom where we learn about people who live under different circumstances, we still need to learn somehow. Learning to respect differences at an early age would be preferable in an ideal world. Learning tolerance, on the other hand, is to miss the point and to claim superiority.

In earlier chapters I have argued that Sellars provides an alternative framework for showing how reports about experiences can be authoritative. Talking about experiences helps us to better understand how they are different. He also explains that normativity is built in to making observations. Learning about anything requires we acknowledge certain

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[56] Thomas Lacqueur "Facts of Fatherhood" and Sara Ruddick "Thinking about Fathers" in Hirsch and Fox Keller eds (1990).

standards so that we can agree about simple things, like colours. But normativity is supposed to be used for descriptive purposes: standard conditions under which we can view blue (blue can look green under fluorescent lighting for instance); standard observers (people who are not colour blind); and so on. When we start to make value judgments such as that blue is better than green, we realise that our prescriptions for agreeing that something is the case has an added value judgment.

Moreover, as Moreton-Robinson argues, there are recognised "experts" and different ways of claiming authority in different contexts and cultures. The standards and conditions for authority in an Aboriginal context is different from those of non-Aboriginals and from 'Asians.' As Ang's title "I'm a feminist, but..." indicates, the feminist context is already limited by certain claims about women's universality. (1995: 57) All empirical knowledge is infected with normativity, whether that be recognition of certain experts, which conditions limit the research and whether or not the standards are biased.[57]These value judgments end up informing our knowledge to make us sexist, classist or racist. So, whilst normativity is an important component of our knowledge because it enables us to set standards for agreement, the standards we learn are often steeped in bias for certain types of observers.

Hartsock overlooks the normative infection of all empirical knowledge. Kristeva, on the other hand, recognises this infection. Kristeva says that femininity is not only constructed by a social system which is devised by men for men, femininity is also the very possibility of upsetting that system. But when Kristeva claims that listening to what professional women who are mothers have to say about knowledge could help us to envisage a more

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[57] The sexual bias of medical research is one such example. See Harding (1996).

ethical social system, she does not attempt to privilege either femininity or maternity. In Kristeva's view the feminine is in each of us, irrespective of our genital or reproductive status. She characterises the feminine as consciousness; as experience. Kristeva cites avant-garde poetry written by men to show that their femininity perverts the text by bringing experience into language. In so doing, Kristeva tries to bring the non-normative into empirical knowledge and allies herself with Hartsock. Kristeva's non-normative chora is the "reality" behind appearances in her aim to authenticate empirical knowledge.

Hartsock claims that women have a special type of experience in maternity, which adds to their empirical knowledge. In Kristeva's view, however, *men have these experiences too.* But her non-normative chora reduces all experiences to having consciousness. Everybody *has* consciousness, but because of the father's law we are often too busy to notice consciousness as consciousness. The father's law sets standards against dwelling upon our own conscious experience so that the feminine *chora* is repressed. Maternity is the only domain in which conscious experience for its own sake is not considered transgressive. But, as Hartsock makes clear, in maternity the conscious experience is valued in terms of productivity rather than for its own sake.

It is now time to return to Hegel so that I can show that Hartsock and Chodorow fail to release women from his conception of immature knowledge. Even though Gilligan, for example, argues that Chodorow's conception of relational knowledge is not immature, the fact remains that it is not knowledge. Moreover, given the Hegelian picture of women's intuitive knowledge, there is no way that we are able to learn about abstract concepts like normativity. I will now show why this is the case.

iv Hegel and feminine knowledge

In his section on the family in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel says that women have well developed intuition. He says that "the feminine, in the form of the sister, has the highest intuitive awareness of what is ethical. She does not attain consciousness of it, or to the objective existence of it..." (§457) I shall interpret this idea by providing an overview of Willem de Vries' analysis of what Hegel means by intuition.[58]

As I argued in chapter one, Hegel does not permit women into the domain of particular individuality. Note, however, that this does not mean he characterises them as non-subjects. Instead, he gives women a subjectivity grounded in a material rather than formal language.[59] Having intuitive knowledge endows women not only with sensations of the world and feelings qua bodily states, in Hegel's view, but also with the ability to organise their thoughts about sensations. Their material consciousness is thus not merely passive and determined by genetics and environmental factors, but includes a minimal ability to direct their attention on their bodies and immediate environment.

As humans, women must also have subjective spirit which allows them to become beings for themselves.[60] "Spirit converts nature into an object confronting it, reflects upon it, takes back the externality of nature into its

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[58] de Vries (1988).

[59] De Vries says Hegel distinguishes between two sorts of language: one for physical nature and one for mental facts. These are not to be understood as different natural languages, just languages with different explanatory powers. Women, it seems to me, are prohibited from the language of the mental, given that sensations and feelings are taken to be a kind of physical fact.

[60] Being-for-self is a component of the for-us of Perception.

own inwardness, idealizes nature and thus in the object becomes for-itself."[61] The difference between women and men is, as I have said already, Hegel's denying women access to self-certainty. Self-certainty brings freedom from natural constraints and control over nature. This lack of self-certainty for women indicates that women's reproductive function disables their ability to develop abstract concepts. Similarly, Hartsock argues that women are closer to nature than men as a result of their reproductive labour. She also endorses Chodorow's claim that women do not have a well defined sense of self. This can be construed, in Hegelian terms, as lacking self-certainty. The claim that women's knowledge is more relational than men's similarly endorses the Hegelian view of women's universal consciousness.

Hegel distinguishes between inner and outer: between feelings in the body and sensations of the world. The distinction is aetiological, or based on whether the sensation is caused by an internal or external factor. Internal embodied factors are facts of being-for-self. These include not only rumblings of the stomach, for instance, but also the flush of anger, and the "gut feelings" associated with ethical judgments. Herein lies women's potential as ethical agents: their intuitive awareness of what is ethical is a felt awareness rather than a principle based ethics. But intuition, as a particular mode of consciousness, is a step higher than immediate sense-certainty and immediate feelings. Feeling is "preconscious mental activity" in which the self, or subject, does have a role. Intuition is divided between self and world so that there is a sense of self in relation to objects.

Intuition is connected to sensations and feelings because of its sensual nature, but in intuition feeling becomes more abstract. There is a singularity

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[61] Cited in de Vries (1988:50). (§384)

to the feel of intuition which is denied to former sensations and feelings. In intuition the self comes into play because the "spirit" comes into play and presents objects which had previously been produced throughout the body in the "feeling soul." An internal split takes place in intuition, not unlike the split discussed in the previous chapter. The split occurs between the two forces: the active subject and the passive object of attention. The active self is now able to focus her attention upon things.[62]

In intuition, the distinction between self and world emerges. So there is a sense of self, as a kind of unitary consciousness which can actively direct her attention onto feelings in her body, which is now distinctly world rather than self. She is also able to direct her attention onto objects in her immediate environment. But, although she can direct her attention on external objects or inner feelings, she is unable to direct her attention onto the sense of self which directs. The inability to focus on her self as such prevents the movement into higher levels of consciousness so that her knowledge remains perceptive rather than engaging in proper thought. Hegel's tripartite schema of mental abilities places intuitions before representations which, in turn, must be developed for the higher level of thought.

Intuitions are explained by considering normative conditions which make episodes of intuition possible. These conditions include environmental factors, or the external factors in terms of what is present in the world in the

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[62] De Vries says "The fact that spirit finds itself in intuition implies an internal split, a distinction between that which finds and that which is found. In intuition spirit is self-related, which requires that there be two distinguishable (though not necessarily separable) moments. Naturally, these two moments are thoroughly correlative: the moment of spiritual activity is attention; what is found is a spatiotemporal world." (1988, 111-112)

immediate location and time; factors about the perceptual apparatus, or whether all sense organs are functioning in the standard way; and the functioning of subjective spirit, or the observer as a unitary force. These are all causal facts about a standard observer. Although each of these three factors are standard in intuition, in representation, subjective spirit comes to play a more active role.

Again we are reminded of Hartsock's claim that women's knowledge is more accurate with respect to mapping reality than men's abstract representational knowledge. But such a claim denies the progression of representation towards proper thought in the Hegelian schema.[63] The first concept is the sense of self which accompanies the object of thought. This early thought reflects the immediate environment, just as a mirror does.[64] The development of thought proper is more dynamic. Thought entails a synthesis of the manifold of sensual experiences into concepts. But there are

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[63] It is difficult to deny that Hegel must have allowed that women develop language, so they must also enter the phase of representation. This is in accord with Lloyd's claim that Hegelian dialectic brings women into a middle ground (see chapter one appendix). The middle ground must be that of representation, beyond intuition and before thought. It is not clear whether Hegel claims we must attain self-certainty prior to using language so I am assuming that intuition and representation are similar to perception and understanding. 'Intuition' might be another word for the Hegelian stage of Perception. de Vries says this, but he also says that intuition is not one of the stages of Consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. He claims that much of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is updated in later works. My concern here is to understand his claims about women in the "ethical order" as described in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

[64] de Vries says intuition is like a mirror, but there is an active ability to reorganize input and the images need not relate to immediate environment. (1988, 143)

two types of concepts: abstract and concrete. The abstract concepts, or universals are stand-alone instances of things, whereas concrete concepts are more dynamic in that they integrate linguistic truth with concrete facts about the world. Concrete concepts are interrelated in a dynamic network by which men are able to think about the world. Self-consciousness evolves through men's knowledge of their active ability to constitute the world in thought as such. This constitutive ability requires that concepts are not simply descriptive but also prescriptive.[65] Concepts should thus be thought of as active constitutive abilities rather than as passive entities.[66]

Learning to think entails learning language and learning to make connections. But seeing oneself as making these connections is a move from "theoretical spirit" to "practical spirit." In theoretical spirit, we develop ideas about the world. In practical spirit, on the other hand, we encounter the human will and the necessary self-consciousness to act upon the will. Women never have this will, insofar as they never develop the necessary self consciousness. The will brings the freedom to have control over nature,

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[65] de Vries says: "Something's concept offers an ideal pattern that the thing strives to realize in the course of its existence, although individual things are never perfect exemplars of their essence... Thus what Hegel calls a concept is a prescriptive ideal that is part of a system of such ideals that the world is striving to realize and in terms of which we can make sense of what happens in the world." (1988: 172-173)

[66] We think the author meant the following: If concepts are required for possession of knowledge, and they are 'active constitutive abilities' rather than passive entities, mere passive experiential states cannot be knowledge.- ed. See de Vries (1988: 171-174) for a more comprehensive explanation of concrete concepts.

rather than simply to observe what exists.[67] Insofar as women are viewed as closer to nature, they too are subject to the control of men's will.

My overview of Hegel indicates several respects in which Hartsock follows Hegel. Women's consciousness is closer to nature and so less likely to misrepresent the world as it is. Their sensuous activities make them experts on feelings and, by association, feeling towards others. But women lack the ability to control nature. It remains to be explained how the sensuous nature of women could withstand development into the higher realms of spirit without losing the important embodied focus Hegel associates with intuition. In one sense, it is important for him to keep women at that stage to compensate for men's transcendence into the conceptual realm.

Lloyd sums up Hegel's conception of women's conscious as follows

> Hegel did not intend his descriptions of female consciousness to be dismissive of women. He sees the nether world as necessary to the wider life of Society. From the male perspective, its existence allows men to flourish as fully self-conscious ethical beings without sacrificing natural feeling. And from this perspective women can indeed be seen as in some respects morally superior to men; virtuous women make of the unpromising material of natural feeling and particular relationships something genuinely ethical and universal. (1993:85)

The Hegelian process of development has compressed men into their own minds in such a way that they are no longer able to access feelings as women do. The certainty of men as to whether such feelings exist depends upon their interactions with women. Women retain the "gut feeling" dimension of ethics, well and truly superseded in the spiralling self-consciousness of men. Women simply "read off" their environments in the form of feelings and sensations without the possible inaccuracies of representational bias. Men

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[67] See de Vries (1988: 198-200)

thus depend upon women to act as a kind of barometer of the world, providing data for their mature thought to interpret.

Why, we might ask, is this split necessary for Hegel? Why are men unable to read off the environment and interpret the data? In Sellars' view, each individual starts out with this thermometer like approach to the environment. This is a causal story about the environment and about our perceptual apparatus. Hegel does not deny this is the case either but he falls into the trap of taking his theoretical model of mind as though it were actual. To put this in Sellars words:

> Unfortunately, he mislocates the truth of these conceptions, and, with a modesty forgivable in any but a philosopher, confuses his own creative enrichment of the framework of empirical knowledge, with an analysis of knowledge as it was. He construes as *data* the particulars and arrays of particulars which he has come to be able to observe, and believes them to be antecedent objects of knowledge which have somehow been in the framework from the beginning. (§62)

The point is that once we have developed a theoretical framework by which we are able to identify certain sorts of inner episodes, it is easy to forget the framework as a theoretical construction. In so doing, the inner episodes are conceived as having "been there from the beginning." But, if we accept that these episodes are there, in our heads as it were, without our constituting these, we are back to the dilemma of positing experiences as a foundation for our knowledge. We are at a loss to explain, as Hegel tries to do, how these experiences fit into our conceptual schema. Hegel fits them in all right, but in so doing our experiences are the object of thought rather than being intrinsic to the subject. This in turn reopens the gap between subject and object as a gap between thought, or knowledge, and experience, which leaves us wondering how subject and object, or self and world can be reconciled.

Sellars, we recall, has us reading off our environment and making utterances. The former is explained causally and the latter is explained as a social fact. Sellars bypasses all talk of subjects and objects by claiming that learning utterances require also learning standards and practices. Our observational knowledge is retroactive: we know something to be the case only after we have competently understood and demonstrated the standards under which our claims are true. We therefore need to develop a holistic network of observational concepts and epistemic norms before we know anything. But we do not have access to any mental episodes until we create these as theoretical episodes. Doing this requires watching others' behaviour with thought before creating our own minds, as it were. The subject is able to report about sensations and feelings as she develops a theoretical vocabulary of objective facts. Her vocabulary about feelings is not merely subjective, on this view, because Sellars bypasses the subjective and objective distinction. He does this by making everything primarily objective insofar as nothing holds for one person unless it also holds for others abiding by the same standards under similar conditions.

Hegel does not properly emphasis the social fact. Instead he has sensations and feelings combining in intuitions to explain the causal story. This causal story is not problematic unless it is also taken to be a kind of knowledge. Given that women are the experts in this domain, in Hegel's view, it is difficult to suggest otherwise. For if it were not knowledge, women could not develop the necessary theoretical episodes by which they can introspect. Moreover, the subject and object *need* to be divided, in Hegel's description of mental development to explain the development of subjective spirit. Spirit takes hold in intuitions precisely because this phase requires that one at least

notices their psychological experience as unitary and is able to thus direct it upon the body and beyond.

The psychological experience of intuition is Cartesian. Here we have a unitary sense of self as a self which, in Cartesian terms, is private, immediate and given. Even though this is not self-certainty in the Hegelian sense, it is self-certainty in the Cartesian sense insofar as that which cannot be doubted by Descartes is his *sensation* of thought. It is this inner feel which cannot be reconciled with the material body or, to put it another way, reduced to the physical. And it is this inner feel which, at the end of the day, leaves us with the possibility that we might be zombies.

From this discussion of Hegel, it is clear that Nancy Hartsock characterizes feminine knowledge as Hegel does. She argues that women are attuned to learning about things through sensuous contact with their world. Their knowledge is organised through habitual repetition of sensuous tasks. Their relationships with each other are forged through the universal experience of living in a female body. There is no definitive self-knowledge. A kind of universal empathy might thus be said to exist between women. But the problems are many. First, allowing the possibility that mothers are zombies will never help their epistemic authority. Worse still, there is no way of denying that the epistemic privilege of mothers is given by God as maternal instinct. Finally, the ability of women to change the normative perspective is undermined by the Hegelian vision of concepts as being already prescriptive rather than as descriptive.

Conclusion

It is not clear that women can develop the sort of standpoint Hartsock promotes if their knowledge is thus characterised. Either pregnant women

and mothers in general are zombies, or their epistemic privilege is given by god. In the first case, they have no authority over their experiences because they do not have the sensuous experiences they think they have. In the second case, they have no authority over their experiences because these are determined by god. The universality to which Hartsock aspires could then be confirmed as being god's will. But, as Spelman argues, taking women's experiences as universal is unsupported because of significant differences emerging from women's different social situations.

In this chapter I have emphasised the importance of normativity to knowledge. Normativity is always prescriptive and adds value judgments to descriptions. But I have argued that we cannot dispense with normativity altogether. Normative standards help us learn a language so that we can have any knowledge. The question is whether or not extra values are added to our descriptions, as is the case when mothers are viewed as being fundamentally different from anyone else in the world. On what basis can we found such a prescriptive idealisation of maternity? As Hartsock rightly says, the devaluation of women's work as a labour of love has been taken for granted for far too long.

In the following chapter we continue to examine Hartsock's claims about sexual difference. There I will focus on her views about masculinity, exemplified in her view by none other than Georges Bataille. But, as I argued in chapter one, Bataille rightly contests the Hegelian vision of experience as immature knowledge, so he is a poor example for her purposes of demonstrating the abstract nature of masculine thought. Taking seriously her claims about the perverse valuation of abstract concepts over concrete experiences, I shall return to Marx's views about alienation and false consciousness before I offer the positive attributes of Bataille's theory. But, in

chapter five I add a warning that experiences can be over emphasised as a positive domain for exploration and that more than a modicum of discipline must be taken into consideration. It cannot be emphasised enough that knowing about experiences is as much a domain of expertise as any other. Therefore the world is filling with experts in the so-called perverse knowledge that leads to violence against women; and against others.

Chapter Five

"perverse" masculinity: Hartsock and Bataille

In this chapter I turn to Nancy Hartsock's claim that all men's knowledge is "both partial and fundamentally perverse." Hartsock argues that men's knowledge is partial because, unlike feminist knowledge, it is not structured by material existence. She takes Nancy Chodorow's object-relations theory to support her own idea that all men have the sort of false consciousness Marx associates with the ruling class. Chodorow claims that boys have a more definite sense of self than girls, making masculine knowledge more individualistic and feminine knowledge more relational.

In this chapter I set out Hartsock's claims about masculine knowledge, showing how it relates to Marxian and Lacanian theory. Hartsock presents men as though they are the psycho-zombies I introduced in my discussion of Lacan in chapter 3.[68] Men's knowledge is understood to be "dualist" inasmuch as men see themselves in opposition to women. Hartsock's claims about dualism are nevertheless confusing because she characterises men as idealists, exhibiting pure reason in opposition to the "materialism" of women. Men's knowledge is partial, in Hartsock's view, because the ideology of masculinity cuts them off from their inner experiences. Like psycho-zombies, men are alienated from the truth of their being.

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[68] I introduced the term psycho-zombies in chapter three. These are different from the philosophical zombies who do not have experiences insofar as the psycho-zombie has experiences but cannot access these.

Hartsock's vision of masculinity also takes from Marx the notion of false consciousness. Not only is masculine knowledge partial, in her view, it is also fundamentally perverse. Men's perversity, she argues, is based in their substitution of life for death. Giving life is women's business whereas men engage in conflicts or wars, and give "pride of place to killing." (231) Hartsock characterises the falsity of masculinity by turning to Hegel and Bataille. Hegel's dualism is apparent in the conflict between the dominant and subordinate consciousness but Bataille takes this further by equating sex with death, rather than with life. She argues that men are threatened by women, who remind them of their mothers, so they seek sexual satisfaction by dominating or, in extreme cases, brutalising and killing women. (231)

Although Hartock argues that Bataille values death over life, she fails to explain that he describes the death of the unitary subject in erotic experiences. Bataille describes a figurative, rather than literal death in which humans experience the continuity of life. Although it is difficult to deny that Bataille is "perverse," I will examine his argument about death of the unitary subject in which he associates erotic experiences with mystical experiences. Bataille's perversity can be more closely associated with femininity and maternity than with the abstract masculinity described above.

In section one I will review Hartsock's claims about masculinity and the feminist standpoint before turning to a discussion of Marxian theory in section two. Marxian theory prepares the way for a more accurate analysis of Bataille's views on perversity in sections three and four.

i psycho-zombies and perversity

Hartsock claims that gender differences can be explained by the sexual division of labour in child rearing leading to differing psychological

experiences for girls and boys respectively. She says these differences, when observed in the context of a class society, "leads on the one hand toward a feminist standpoint and on the other toward an abstract masculinity." (227) The sexual division of labour is responsible for abstract masculinity, not only because the boy has to identify with an absent person, but also because the boy's identity is threatened by his mother. (227) In this section I will examine Hartsock's claim that the threat posed by the mother is a cause of an implicit (and sometimes explicit) sexual violence in the male psyche.

Chodorow's psychoanalytic theory provides an explanation for gender differences as a pre-oedipal phenomenon. Hartsock brings Freud's oedipus complex into her own discussion of ego development, saying "the problem for the boy is to distinguish himself from the mother and to protect himself against the real threat she poses for his identity." The incestual threat, through which the boy risks losing any clear distinction between self and other, "lead[s] to the formation of rigid ego boundaries." (227) But, in Hartsock's view,

> the boy's construction of self in opposition to unity with the mother, his construction of identity as differentiation from the other, sets a hostile and combative dualism at the heart of both the community men construct and the masculinist world view by means of which they understand their lives. (227)

Hostility towards women is implicit in having a well defined ego, in this account, because the ego is only possible if one is not the same gender as the mother. Girls, we recall, do not ever have these rigid ego boundaries because they are the same sex as the mother. Moreover, boys' hostility towards their mothers is reflected socially insofar as boys will someday grow up and, as men, they will participate in social institutions which are also hostile towards

women. So long as men retain this social power, there is little prospect for reforming social relations.

Hartsock's explicit epistemological claim is that boys develop a dualist knowledge, rather than the materialist knowledge she associates with femininity. Dualist knowledge is "hostile and combative" and "replicates itself in both the hierarchical and dualist institutions of class society and in the frameworks of thought generated by this experience." (227) One such framework is Hegel's Master/Slave duality, she says, in which men fight each other to death. (227) The struggle between two self-conscious beings is taken to characterise a "duality of concrete versus abstract." Concrete experience is not a model for masculinity which depends upon fantasising about public life as an escape from the humdrum of home life. She argues that men's knowledge is less "natural" than women's knowledge; the former being "abstract" or inferential and based in mere appearances rather than properly representing reality.

I argued in chapter four that Hartsock interprets Hegel's immediate knowledge, or being-in-itself, as private knowledge, given by experience, rather than as non-inferential knowledge. Hartsock characterises experience as a kind of knowledge, at least insofar as we know what sex we are from our experiences; and that from these experiences we know with which gender we must identify.[69] Women continue to have this kind of experience-based

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[69] Chodorow's characterisation of gender develop in the pre-oedipal phase presupposes a lot of prepacked concepts. Spelman makes this point as well, as mentioned in chapter four. For example, Chodorow suggests boys know that they have a penis; that they are male; that they are like their father and that they are opposed to their mothers; that they must identify with their fathers and so on.

knowledge; men have inferential, or "abstract" knowledge. Hartsock faces Young's problem: she cannot explain how we know we have experiences in the first place, leaving us open to scepticism about other minds. Women could be zombies on this picture. Ironically, however, Hartsock argues to the effect that men are zombie-like; as though men replace their feelings with inferential knowledge. I use the term "psychozombies" for this characterisation of the relationship between experience and knowledge. Hartsock *evaluates* the knowledge of men, or psychozombies, with standpoint epistemology as her ground, arguing that men create a world of false appearances: culture. In Hartsock's view, then, women's knowledge is more "natural" than men's knowledge:

> According to Hartsock, however, men see the valuation as reversed: men's knowledge is "valuable, if abstract and deeply unattainable, the other useless and demeaning." Rather than saying that knowledge based in experience is only characterised as "useless and demeaning" when couched in terms of private knowledge (which is useless and has no meaning), as I am arguing, Hartsock takes a different route. As we have seen already, she turns to Marxian standpoint epistemology to show that subjective knowledge is more valuable than objective knowledge. With the appearance/reality distinction as her guide, Hartsock argues that men's knowledge is based in appearances, but nevertheless determines the lives of women from a false perspective of value. She says that men value the abstract over the concrete; mind over body, culture over nature, ideal over real, stasis over change. (228) According to standpoint epistemology, however, this is a reversal of natural values, which tell us how things ought to be. So, in Hartsock's view, the reversal of values makes possible relations of domination and subordination through sustaining a false consciousness.

In the following section I turn to Marx to examine the valuation of exchange over production by which we must understand Hartsock's claims about dualism. She takes Marx's account of the relations between the ruling class and proletariat to explain the subordination of women to men. Marxian exchange value is false, in her view, as are associated terms: mind; culture; abstract; stasis.

Women, she argues, produce and sustain life; more so than the Marxian proletariat. Women's knowledge is thus more grounded in the body than the proletariat: their knowledge is more natural; concrete and elastic. Dualism, thus characterised, "marks phallocentric society and social theory." (228) Plato, for instance, favours love of knowledge over concrete reality which Hartsock takes as evidence of philosophy's masculinity. She says that the philosophers' ideas dominate over their personal natures, informing Western thought and social relations with an implicit masculine bias. In opposition to this ideal of masculinity, she says, women are thought to be ruled by their bodies, rather than minds. As I argued in chapter four, however, Hartsock's standpoint reinforces this vision of femininity rather than denying it. She argues that male experience is an inversion of materialist femininity. I turn now to Marx on alienation and standpoint epistemology for a clearer picture of his views.

ii Marx on alienation and standpoint epistemology

As we have seen, Hartsock describes social relations as masculine and authentic human relations as feminine. Hartsock says that "Marxian theory needed to go beneath the surface to discover the different levels of determination which defined the relation of capitalist and (male) worker." (232) For Marx, going beneath the surface is a matter of moving closer to an

understanding of nature and the way things really are. The capitalist is thus defined by a false consciousness based on the value of exchange over production. The worker buys into capitalist values, working hard to survive by alienating himself [sic] from his labour and selling that labour to the capitalist. But, Marx argues, the worker can reclaim his own labour if, like Robinson Crusoe, he were to have the opportunity to produce things for his own use. According to Marx, a subsistence lifestyle leads to knowledge of the way things really are through an integration of mind and body; culture and nature; abstract and concrete; stasis and change.

Marx argues that humans are different from animals because we have the added capacity to think about what we produce. The ability to think about production is that which Marx calls the "species-life" for humans. But, he warns, our ability to think about production can be detrimental when we lose touch with nature and with our own being. By thinking too much about production we narrow our focus to the end result and disregard the process. When making boots, for instance, the boot-maker will become focused upon how many boots he can make for a wage or income, rather than upon the smell of the leather, the death of the animals, and the way he uses his body to make the boots.

The capitalist division of labour adds a further complication to the boot-maker's dilemma. The boot-maker works in a factory, amongst other boot-makers who must produce boots for a wage. The boots these people make belong not to themselves, but to the person who owns the factory. Marx says that the ownership of our labour by others leads to an alienation from our true selves by making us into a means who is distinct from the end product of our time and efforts. It is no longer the physical complexity of the boot-maker as a person which counts, but the ability of this person to work to the owner's

specifications. The owner buys the boot-maker's labour, isolating the work from the person in a rather obscure manner.

In Marx's words, alienated labour

> makes the species-being of man, both nature and the intellectual faculties of his species, into a being that is alien to him, into a means for his individual existence. It alienates man from his own body, nature exterior to him, and his intellectual being, his human essence. (Marx, 1977: 282)

Marx argues that, from the perspective of the ruling class, the worker is nothing more than a means of production. The body and intellect of the worker are only valued with respect to the participation in the economy of exchange. From the capitalist perspective, the worker is a commodity: Her body and intellect are only valued according to the value of her participation in production. But the consequence of this perspective is the alienation of the worker from her own essence. The individual's body and intellect has no value in and of itself. The worker must externalise her sense of self from her body and intellect in order to have some sense of value or worth. For Marx the economy of exchange depends on this process of externalisation; or the alienation of the worker from her essential self.

Hartsock claims that the capitalist perspective is dualist. By this she means that there is a system in which ideas are valued over sensuous experiences. The knowledge of the person who values herself in terms of production for the exchange of goods does so at the expense of valuing the work that goes into production and the product itself. In other words, the concrete facts of production are of secondary value to the abstract monetary exchange value. From the perspective of exchange, the worker is seen not as a human being but as a mode of production; or as a means to an end. The worker is alienated from her labour to this end: her *work* is a commodity within the labour

market. In Marx's view, this process of commodification leads to a series of dualisms by which each person is divided between what they are and what they produce.

Commodification is a process in which someone else's ideas are materialised into things. Status is determined by things, how many things any person has. The ruling class have self consciousness reason which enables them to subject others to objectification.[70] Not only do the ruling class have the ideas, they also have the means by which they can pay others to materialise their ideas. Slaves, on this account, want to be masters, and thus want to have status. But status is not really about ideas at all, in Marx's view, status is about commodification. Humans value the qualitative over the quantitive so that there can be masters and slaves. The slaves only participate because they think that they too can someday have what the masters have.

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[70] See Hyppolite (1969) for an interesting discussion of the way Marx reads Hegel's objectification as alienation. Hyppolite says "the whole Marxist critique amounts to showing, by interpreting every objectification as an alienation, the confusion which victimizes Hegel." (1969: 179) He says Marx "does not wonder how this abstraction is possible and how nature can reveal itself as sense, abstract itself from itself, and think itself." (1969: 179) I take Hyppolite's reading of Hegel to support de Vries' interpretation of Hegel with Sellars and "the myth of the given" in mind. This also suggests that Sartre, de Beauvoir, Lacan, Bataille and Merleau-Ponty, each of whom attended Kojeve's lectures on Hegel, will have a decidedly Marxist reading, perhaps each confusing alienation and objectification. This is certainly the case for Young (1984), whose paper is titled "Pregnant Embodiment: subjectivity and alienation." Kristeva refuses to accept that alienation must be objectification in her dismissal of the psychozombie.

Indeed, the alienation of the worker is the crux of the matter for Marx: the alienation of the worker is a process of dehumanisation: the labour is understood in terms of an object which can be bought and sold. Like slaves to their masters, workers sell their labour in the hope that one day they will have enough money to sit back and let someone else do all the work. Alienation occurs on a number of levels, in Marx's view: the worker is alienated from her labour (it is owned by the employer); the worker is alienated from her product (it is owned by someone else); the worker is alienated from other workers (because they are all competing for work and money); and the worker is alienated from her species (because of her abstraction from her "animal" nature). Moreover, on the most subtle level, the worker loses complete control over precisely what is produced and precisely how it is produced. This alienation from control reduces human labour to something like a machination. In this sense of alienation, the worker is reduced to a level that is somewhat parallel to a machine.

Marx's question, then, is this: why are workers complicit within the structure of Western capitalism? In Marx's words:

> The life-process of society, which is based on the process of material production, does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan (1867 [1959]: 84).

Marx claims that there is something mysterious about the process of productivity in which men (and women) participate freely irrespective of their class. Marx notes that both parties (the ruling and the working classes) believe that they are *free* to participate in the capitalist economy. This idea of freedom is nevertheless false. The worker may *appear* to be free, but the worker is not truly free so long as she is alienated in the abovementioned ways. Instead of being a free subject, the worker is a commodity and is *used* by

the ruling class. On the surface, the worker may feel free. The worker has a use-value, and it is through that use-value that the worker gains a sense of importance. The worker sees status as a useful commodity. But, for Marx, this status is fetishistic.

Marx describes the "fetishism" that is associated with commodities; a fetishism that leads to an ideology of commodification. The fetishism of commodities is revealed in the focus on their associated use-value as opposed to their survival value or on the conditions of their production. The use-value of a commodity is, in turn, determined by the amount of time and work entailed in production and some arbitrarily defined status. But this status becomes removed from the value associated with subsistence and survival. The value is no longer based in communitarian participation for quality of life. Instead the status is based in the privilege attributed to those who have lots of money, commodities and the means to employ others. Therefore, as Marx argues, the fetish associated with products is the conversion of products to commodities with a value that is more aligned with status than with subsistence. (83) This kind of status gives those who have commodities the power which determines how everybody else lives.

In Marx's view, people who have power in capitalist societies determine that everybody else depends upon production, exchange and use of commodities. Their privilege is determined by the ideology, rather than by thinking about quality of life. Production and use of goods are necessary for survival. But the added dimension of exchange distorts the value of goods for survival, creating the commodity. Commodification adds the arbitrary value of status over and above need. Status is accrued through the accumulation of goods over and above basic survival needs. But the valuation of status over general welfare generates a false consciousness in

Marx's view. We rally for status and it is this need for status that causes a false consciousness.

Marxian analysis is an interrogation of the epistemology of specific class relations in which both parties, despite the outright inequity of status, remain complicit. Implicit within this view is the concept of alienation, in which the workers lose sight of themselves and their basic subsistence needs. Losing sight of their full potential as natural beings, the workers chase the possibility of status through ownership by viewing all objects, and themselves, as commodities. This is dehumanising because the workers are alienated from their labour, the product and from each other. The workers, according to Marx, are most disadvantaged by the false view that they, too, can have status.

Even though the proletariat are complicit within the ideology of capitalism, Marx claims that workers have the potential to see precisely how the capitalist machine renders them disadvantaged. Marx uses Defoe's mythical island dwelling character Robinson Crusoe to make the point about false consciousness. The difference between Crusoe and any worker in a capitalist society is precisely that Crusoe gets to enjoy the fruit of his labour. (1867 [1959]: 81) The difference between Crusoe and most workers is this: Crusoe is not alienated from his work or his products. On Crusoe's island there is no exchange economy because there is nobody with whom to exchange goods. Crusoe, then, has the potential to know what true productivity is.

Workers, according to Marx, have the potential to know what true productivity like Robinson Crusoe, even though they live in a social group. In Marx's words

> All the characteristics of Robinson's labour are here repeated, but with this difference, that they are social instead of individual. Everything produced by him was exclusively the

result of his own personal labour and therefore simply an object of use for himself. (1867 [1959]: 83)

Marx argues that living in a social group does not require alienation. He says that the individuals within a group could benefit from their own labour as does Crusoe, eliminating the false consciousness otherwise faced by those complicit in the race for status. In other words, individual workers within the group are not necessarily compelled to sell their labour. These individuals might make their own clothes, grow their own vegetables and make furniture for their own home, gaining satisfaction from the process of working at these things; and from using these things to meet their own needs for subsistence. Importantly, those who do work to meet their own subsistence gain a different perspective, or *standpoint*, from those caught up in the status quo of exchange. Moreover, having experienced alienation themselves, those workers might have a more comprehensive view of the social construction of labour than any member of the ruling class, who have not themselves experienced alienation, could ever have. So the standpoint of those who can see alienation for what it is turns out to be broader than the perspective of those who are complicit within the alienating structure of the workforce. Those who are complicit in alienation have a false consciousness and those who are not complicit have the advantage of a broader vision of capitalist values as being distorted beyond the needs of subsistence to create the arbitrary need for status. They have a privileged standpoint if, and only if, they incorporate their labour into social practices from which each participant has the benefits of enjoying the fruits of their collective labour.

The capitalist is denied this kind of privilege, in Marx's view, being blinded by his own greed for power and status. Status is assessed as though it is an object. But status is only gained through communal agreement, making it

something created by knowledge rather than something which, like an object, exists. The commodification of status is only given through false consciousness. The ruling class do not have epistemic privilege, however, because their status is determined by what they *have* rather than by how they *know*. This, Marx explains, is how they become blinded.

But Marx makes a similar error in his revisionary characterisation of the proletariat as having an epistemic privilege because their privilege is as much about having as it is about knowing. By bringing consciousness back into knowledge, as Marx does in the case of the proletariat, the privilege is not so much one of having knowledge as it is one of having experiences. The epistemic privilege is possible because the alienation as abstraction is cancelled, or negated, to produce experience as subjective knowledge. The negation of alienation is the negation of abstract knowledge in Marx's view, which makes way for subjective knowledge. Subjective knowledge is made possible by thinking about activities, or thinking about labour, making such knowledge impossible for the essentially lazy capitalists.

In Hegelian terms, the Marxian move suggests that being-for-itself is not related to the being-in-itself when the worker is alienated. This, in turn, suggests that the worker develops self-consciousness at the expense of consciousness. We have already seen, in chapter three, that Lacan makes a similar move by claiming that we are "castrated", meaning that we are socialised according to the standards and practices of capitalist societies in such a way that our conscious awareness, or sensations, are repressed, alienated or "foreclosed" from our speech. The result, I argue, is a psycho-zombie. But, if consciousness is alienated to the extent that there is no longer any conscious experience, how are we to explain subjective knowledge? We have already reviewed the alternatives and problems of claiming that

subjective knowledge is given by sensations: if it is knowing in-itself, rather than simply being-in-itself, experiences are understood as deeply private and cannot be communicated. That being the case, we are unable to explain how we know we are not zombies in the sense articulated in chapter two. Hartsock's claims about feminine knowledge are subject to the same dilemma to which Iris Young's account of maternal consciousness is subject.

Hartsock's claims about masculinity suggest that all men are psycho-zombies. In Hartsock's view, men are more alienated than women in the sexual division of labour. False consciousness produces the sexual division of labour because the worker is blinded to his own experiences as he rallies for power and status as a man who makes money while his wife stays at home and looks after the children. Women are largely caught up in the false consciousness, wanting to access status by supporting their husbands and being a good wife and a good mother.[71]

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[71] We are reminded of de Beauvoir's concept of "bad faith" discussed in chapter one. But the difference between Hartsock and de Beauvoir is that the former argues for an epistemic privilege instead of arguing that *epistemology* is not a matter for consideration when we are thinking about the differences between the sexes. "Bad faith" comes about through having the knowledge to make choices to improve the conditions of existence but not acting upon that knowledge. Epistemic privilege, on the other hand, refers to a private knowledge which cannot be shared. The result is a claim by Hartsock for knowledge which can only be shared between women who have the same kinds of sexual bodies. And the privilege is increased, or so it appears by the argument, when women engage in maternity. The mistake is to think that the knowledge is privileged because such a claim leads to the possibility that mothers cannot know whether or not they are zombies for the same reasons I presented in my discussion of Young in chapter two.

But in Hartsock's view, the sexual division of labour is only part of the story. She argues that men are perverse. In this section I have presented an overview of Marxian alienation and false consciousness to demonstrate why Hartsock thinks we are all caught up in the rally for status through commodification. The partiality of masculinist consciousness is only part of the story for Hartsock, who argues further that the individualism of masculine epistemology is fundamentally perverse.

iii Bataille and the incest taboo: perversion and feeling

Lacan claims that there are two sorts of consciousness: one articulable and one inarticulable. The articulable consciousness is masculine because it is based in a false social consciousness which is traced back to the incest taboo. The inarticulable consciousness is feminine, in Lacan's view, again on the basis of the incest taboo. He claims the inarticulable sensuous consciousness is a libidinous drive which must be controlled so that humans can live together by agreed communitarian standards. In Lacan's view, however men and women have both sorts of consciousness, but their social position is determined by whether they have or lack the phallus. In Lacan's theory, one would not need to be Robinson Crusoe to see things as they really are: rather one needs only to transgress cultural taboos. Bataille follows Lacan in this direction.

The fact that women and men continue to cohabit the world, despite their different perspectives suggests that social structures cannot be completely divorced from reality. The partiality of males, she claims, is evident in the fact they live out the abstract side of dualisms but their "perverseness" is located in "the substitution of death for life." Women nourish life in virtue of their child rearing labour whereas men seek out death. The reason they do so, in

Hartsock's view, stems back to the rigid ego boundaries. Their individuality suggests a discontinuity with others - Hartsock expresses this as being like a "walled city." So, these men are threatened in their associations with women, who do not have such defined individuality. The threatening aspect of confronting women leads to male domination, in Hartsock's view, gesturing towards "the links between sexual activity, domination and death." (230) Death, in this context, is primarily the death of the ego, or rigid identity of the individual, but extends to actual death.[72]

The context is specific. Hartsock brings Bataille into her analysis of perverseness because he claims that death is a consequence of breaking down the ego-boundaries. But, she claims that "death emerges as the only possible solution to this discontinuity and has followed the logic through to argue that reproduction itself must be understood not as the creation of life, but as death." (230) She cites Bataille's claims about the shared prohibitions of erotic activity and human sacrifice. His colourful prose reads like a rape scene as a man penetrates the woman, who is at once stripped of her identity so that she loses the ability to distinguish between self and other. I will return to Bataille's claims about sacrifice and eroticism in this passage later. Hartsock takes this characterisation of Bataille's conception of violence to support her claims about male sexuality. She argues that "the links between violence, death and sexual fusion with another ... are not simply theoretical" if we take into account the actual incidence of rape, pornography and, even, "snuff"

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[72]Gwen thought there was an inconsistency in Hartsock's position: The contradiction between seeing male perversity in the isolatedness of masculinity and in the drive to break down this isolation. Gwen never got to developing this point, but intended it as a type of reductio on Hartsock's position. - eds.

movies. She says that Bataille's analysis of the links between sacrifice and eroticism help us to understand why men are turned on by snuff films. The woman who is killed in these films "is a sacrificial victim whose discontinuous existence has been succeeded by her death." (231)

Bataille's claim to a link between reproduction and death fascinates Hartsock, but as I shall argue later, she misrepresents his theory. Moreover, it is not clear that she fully comprehends the significance of the epistemological death to which Bataille refers. The discontinuity is a shattering of self-certainty. There is an association between the shattering of self-certainty, or death of the ego, and reproduction. As Hartsock says, the sperm and ovum unite to form a unity: two separate entities die in the making of a new life. Thus, as she says, Bataille claims that "love is an urge towards death." But here the context has shifted back to eroticism in which the ego boundaries are shattered when two (or more) people engaged in sexual activities stop thinking and are lost to experience.

In the context of reproduction, again, Hartsock charges Bataille with dismissing growth "as being only 'impersonal'" which is not the female experience. Hartsock says for females pregnancy is neither impersonal, nor experienced as death. This, she writes,

> bespeaks a profound lack of empathy and refusal to recognize the very being of another. It is a manifestation of the chasm which separates every man from every other being and from the natural world, the chasm which both marks and defines the problem of community. (231)

The exegesis of Bataille is confused and confusing. Hartsock presents to us, on one hand, Bataille's idea that death is a solution to the discontinuity of individualism; on the other hand he suggests a continuity in the personal experiences of those Hartsock herself claims have some universal

consciousness: mothers. Bataille's conception of pregnancy as impersonal leads her to claim that the Bataillean man cannot recognise another's existence as such. The individual, who is discontinuous with others, is both a sign of a lack of properly communitarian values; and of the establishment of values as such. Bataille's denial of individual women's experiences is sufficient ground to suppose that insofar as there are communities they are constructed though men as individual agents and woman as being's who are recognized as having no individuality at all.

To summarise, Hartsock presents Bataille as exemplar of perverse masculinity. She takes his ideas about "discontinuity" to support her vision of rigid ego boundaries between men. He claims that the only way to overcome individuality is in "death." Citing a passage about religious sacrifice from his book *Erotism* she suggests he takes women to be selfless beings. Moreover, she says, he proves that *all men* are violent in love, because they fear the possibility that women can undo their individuality. This fear stems from the oedipus complex, but nonetheless manifests time and time again through men's erotic experiences, their interest in pornography and, most incredibly, the fact that men both make and watch films in which women are killed as sex objects. To be sure, this is an extreme manifestation of the association between sex and death. Men's rigid ego boundaries are thus taken to explain rape and other forms of violence towards women.

Not only does she charge Bataille with sexual violence against women, Hartsock also argues that his vision of reproductive continuity undermines women's particular experiences in pregnancy. She claims that Bataille's "dismissal of the experience of another bespeaks a profound lack of empathy and refusal to recognize the very being of another." (231) Indeed, if Bataille

endorsed gratuitous violence, as Hartsock represents him, she would have a point. But she misrepresents his position rather seriously. Rather than present violence as a way of returning to some pre-oedipal state of nature which is violent and threatening, as Hartsock suggests, Bataille argues that violence is a product of culture. In his view, nature is not violent because there are no natural laws which can be violated. In his view, violence is only possible because humans construct laws which can be violated, so he defines violence as the violation of a culturally prescribed taboo.

Breaking rules leads to experiences which are otherwise supposed to be impossible for speaking subjects. Bataille claims that transgressing taboos does not set us back into some primordial state which is fundamentally violent, but that the transgression itself is violent in such a way that we lose a sense of ourselves *as* subjects because these experiences bring about a kind of empathy, or *feeling with* another. He argues that the discontinuous individuality of the subject shatters in situations where each person feels with each other, bringing about a kind of continuity between two individuals.[73] In Bataille's view, the empathy is produced by transgression of taboos; particularly those taboos which are supposed to stop humans from regressing into a state thought to be closer to animal existence than to the progressive conditions of human subjects.

Bataille's account of discontinuity is at odds with that of a Hegelian or Marxian psychoanalytic interpretation. Bataille agrees that, as *subjects*, we are discontinuous with others. But in Bataille's view, the discontinuity is not marked by the moment we use language in virtue of some putative incest

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[73] Richardson sets out some passages to sum up Bataille's perspective of death. See Bataille (1988), (1986) and (1988b).

taboo. Rather, he claims that we are discontinuous beings from birth and that we seek out ways to communicate our continuity thereafter. Although he argues that this communication ultimately takes place in language, Bataille argues that we can also *experience* continuity as adults at times, in eroticism, for example. These experiences shatter the delusion of the unitary subject, in Bataille's view, because the Hegelian subject is supposed to grow out of these non-conceptual visceral episodes. But, like Sellars, Bataille is clear that having experiences is not the same as knowing them. Making sense of our experiences, and knowing them as such, requires that we can communicate about them in language.

Bataille's novels depict gruesome scenarios, including rape and murder, to show that he can write about experiences which are thought to lie outside the Law, to use Lacan's terminology, proving that such experiences are not inarticulable. Eroticism is one type of experience Bataille characterises to make us feel something, so I will present a passage from his well known *Story of the Eye*: (1982) to demonstrate:

> I grew up very much alone, and as far back as I recall I was frightened of anything sexual. I was nearly sixteen when I met Simone, a girl my own age, at the beach in X. Our families being distantly related, we quickly grew intimate. Three days after our first meeting, Simone and I were alone in her villa. She was wearing a black pinafore with a starched white collar. I began to realise that she shared my anxiety at seeing her, and I felt even more anxious that day because I hoped she would be stark naked under the pinafore. She had black silk stockings on covering her knees, but I was unable to see as far up as the cunt (this name...is I think, by far the loveliest of the names for the vagina). It merely struck me that by slightly lifting the pinafore, I might see her private parts unveiled. (1982: 9-10)

In the opening page of *Story of the Eye*, Bataille depicts an instance of prohibited sexual desire through the instance of incest. The narrator of the

Story of the Eye and Simone are "distantly related." Despite this, they are about to embark on a sexual relationship.

Bataille's account of the sexual forays both between the two distantly related characters in *Story of the Eye*, and of these two with others, is not a gratuitous account of incestuous sexuality. His story is founded upon their incestuous desire to mirror the assumptions of Levi-Strauss and Freud, each of whom claim that prohibition of incest differentiates between humans and animals. He mentions Freud, and the story of incest in the "primal horde," but is more interested in what Lévi-Strauss has to say on the topic. In Bataille's words:

> Lévi-Strass contrasts the state of nature with that of culture, roughly as animals are generally contrasted with man. This prompts him to say that the prohibition of incest (and of course he also has in mind the complementary rules of exogamy) "is the primary step thanks to which, through which, and especially in which, the transition from Nature to Culture is made."
> (1986: 198)

The consequence of claiming that incest marks this transition from nature to culture is that humans are humans precisely because of "our decision to eschew the loose freedom of sexual conduct and the natural and unformulated life of the animals." In other words, the incest taboo is understood by Levi-Strauss as the distinguishing factor between humans and animals. But, Bataille argues, this "formula may well imply the final ambition that links with knowledge the desire to reveal man to himself and thus to take over the potentialities of the whole universe." (1986: 198) The link between knowledge and desire to which Bataille refers tells us that the ability to *think* about forbidden experiences produces a particularly human desire. *The Story of the Eye* makes the reader think about what it is like to transgress the incest taboo: the book produces erotic

feelings in (at least some) readers. But it is not incest itself which is erotic here, it is that the erotic feelings are produced by doing something that we are not, as civilised humans, supposed to do.

Bataille is critical of the very sort of "abstract" subjectivity I have labelled the psycho-zombie, numbed out of its feeling states by growing up in a capitalist/patriarchal society. The psycho-zombie is alienated from the truth of her/his species being or "animal consciousness". This species being, or animal consciousness, associated with the Hegelian *in-itself* or sense-certainty, is cut off by all of those prohibitions which tell us not to focus on our feelings. As Bataille puts it

> It must also be agreed that there is a connection between man's denial of the world as he finds it and his denial of the animal element in himself... There is therefore an aspect of the transition from animal to human so radically negative that no one talks about it. (1986: 215)

He says that humans deny our feelings to the point that we do not even realise that we are doing so. We are able to do so because of our "elementary" abilities the very same silencing Hegel, from Bataille's point of view, "himself obeying with his silence the perdurable taboos we all abide by." (1986: 215) Or, to put it another way, Hegel's own blindness to human feelings is produced by an enduring result of the social effort to normalise taboos.

> The conventions regarding our bodily waste products are not given any conscious consideration... On this point the denial is so absolute that we think it beside the point to notice and to assert that here is something worthy of comment." (Bataille, 1986: 215)

The psycho-zombie is thus produced in Hegel's vision of the human animal. But, this non-feeling human construction has the very type of dualist consciousness Hartsock claims that Bataille has. He does not disagree

that it is perverse, but he would disagree that all rational humans are psycho-zombies. There is, in Bataille's view, a way to conceive rational humans other than as the individuals described by Hegel.

Bataille's alternative conception is communitarian, based in practices described by anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1954). Bataille notes that Lévi-Strauss' discussion of incest is also inspired by Mauss. But he argues that Lévi-Strauss' conception of women as the ultimate gift between men is short-sighted. (1986: 197-220) The practices of gift-giving and generosity of spirit identified by Mauss does not describe a simple act of exchanging commodities, or objects. Bataille uses the example of champagne, arguing that it is a gift in which everyone present partakes *with the person who gives.* As Bataille puts it:

> More precisely, festivities entail an outward-goingness, a refusal to turn in upon oneself, and so the calculations of the miser, logical though they may be, are denied the highest value. The sexual relationship is itself a communication and a movement, it is like a celebration by nature, because it is essentially a communication it provokes an outward movement in the first place.
> When the violent movement of the senses has been accomplished, a retraction and a renunciation are called for. But the recoil also requires a rule to organise the merry-go-round and ensure the return of the forward movement. (1986: 207)

He claims that the individualism of the miser is not highly valued because he refuses to really engage with others. Similarly, in Bataille's view, the exchange of women described by Lévi-Strauss leaves out the importance of engagement. As he says, the woman's father "gives" his daughter, but the generosity of gift-giving Bataille is interested in cannot be located in any exchange as such. The engagement is based in sharing the carnality of being human: a carnality, he claims, that is often obscured by the ritual of marriage.

In Bataille's view, gift-giving in general is more appropriately described when we think about the way each partner feels in the sexual engagement. There is a violent eruption of experience in which the exuberant sensuality stills the linguistic thoughts in a silent communication. The merry-go-round of linguistic thoughts later returns to enable the "retraction and renunciation" of moving back from the other/s and thinking about the experience so that it can be renounced. But, according to Bataille, Lévi-Straus supposes that the gift is the renunciation: the rational ability *qua* "the refusal of an immediate animal satisfaction with no strings attached." (218) The two views are thus opposed: Bataille takes the feelings to be essential to the gift whereas Lévi Strauss understands the gift to be the rationality with which we are able to deny those very feelings.

In this section I have briefly outlined the differences between Bataille and Lévi-Strauss' conceptions of gift-giving. Bataille claims that the generosity is carnal insofar as the gift is identified with sharing sensuous experiences. Lévi-Strauss, on the other hand, takes the Hegelian perspective of human progress, seeing rationality and the ability to make taboos as the gift. But, in Bataille's view, taking rationality as the gift which makes us human leads us towards the miserly values of individualism. Such miserly values are based in commodities, taking even women as objects or things which can be given away in order to deny the feeling dimension of the speaking being. "The taboo does not alter the violence of sexual activity, but for disciplined mankind it opens a door closed to animal nature, namely, transgression of the law." (219)

So, the psycho-zombie is never really cut off from his abilities to feel so long as there are laws to be transgressed. The laws draw our attention to situations which enable us to get in touch with the otherwise repressed

feelings. Bataille argues that these feelings are possible for every man who is socially-constructed in the vision of masculinity proposed by Hegel. This version of masculinity is precisely that proposed by Hartsock. Bataille does not agree with Hegel's distinction between nature and culture, or woman and man, inner experience and abstract knowledge. Moreover, he argues that human sensuality is not a foundation for abstract thought: to the contrary, the concepts are necessary so that we can know about our experiences.

iv Bataille, death and self discipline

"Dying to oneself" is a Christian doctrine which Bataille associates with sensuality. "What it condemns is the dragging weight of attachment to the self, in the guise of pride and mediocrity and self-satisfaction." (1986: 230) But, within the Christian religion, Bataille notes, there is a distinction between mystical experience and genital sexuality. The mystics who deny their genital sexuality set themselves against life, and are "seduced by a form that spells death." (231) These mystics deny life, because they deny their corporeal existence which is a kind of death. The denial of this life is rewarded, they suppose, with eternal life. The figurative death of the individual who does not live for the experiences of this life is a peculiar human trait.[74]

Turning to the animal kingdom, Bataille says "Nature ties up life and death in genital matters." He presents the example of animals which die when giving birth, as though that were "nature's intentions." He notes the amount of energy invested in the birth, claiming it is easy to describe such a death as a waste of energy which is nonetheless productive. There is at once a

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[74] The influence of Nietzsche on Bataille is evident in his views about Christianity. See Nietzsche (1973).

loss, through death, and an increase, through birth: but the contradiction is explained away (Bataille cites Schopenhauer) as "Nature's purpose." In Bataille's words: "No one bothered to reflect that "Nature" behaved in a ridiculous way." (232) The contradiction of having life at the moment of death, or death at the moment of life is crucial to Bataille's theory of experience as a figurative death.

The animal who dies giving birth can be "subordinated to the result" in Bataille's view. Looking at outcomes leads us to believe that the animal's death is in some way important to survival of the species. Bataille is more concerned with the moment of death, however, using the example of a drone flying towards a bee as though the creature could know that its death is near. Unlike humans, bees live for the moment. Human's on the other hand, tend to live for the future. As Bataille says, "divine life requires that the seeker after it shall die." (233) Aspiring to the divine requires putting to death the experiences of the flesh and living in the hope of an eternal after-life.

In Bataille's view, dying to oneself is denial of the instincts to survive. The drone flies blindly towards the queen bee, not stopping to think that its end is near. Humans are not so blinded by passion: we do think about consequences and know what to expect. Bataille cites the "holy man" who breaks his vow of chastity through temptation, suggesting that the sexual engagement brings about a death, but that death is "contrary of the one which is the condition of eternal life." The condition for eternal life is death of the body, or of the "creature organized for duration and growth." Preparing the body for eternal life is nonetheless a kind of death of this creature. Living out the sensuality of the human creature, on the other hand, leads to a figurative death of the human subject. Too much self control thus leads to death of sensual experience.

As Bataille says, "The orgasm is popularly termed 'the little death'." The sensuous explosion of the orgasm is a figurative death because it is a loss of control. Love is similarly endowed with "a sense of loss within us." (239) "It is the desire to live while ceasing to live, or to die without ceasing to live, the desire of an extreme state" similar to mystical experience. (239-240) But, says Bataille, this death is also "the ultimate stage of life; if I die because I cannot die it is on condition that I live on; because of the death I feel though still alive and still live on." (240) The death of conscious thought, or the silencing of inner speech is the moment of *feeling* alive. The figurative death is the death of the figurative because it is a loss of self control. In Bataille's view this is a moment of focussing upon what it feels like to live.

Nevertheless, Bataille warns, problems emerge when we attempt to cling to the life of feeling. On one hand we establish institutions like marriage through fear of losing our beloved and the life brought about by sexual union. Marriage is institutionalised as a mystical union, he offers, but not without its problems. He notes the tendency towards violence that takes place in marriage without condoning it. We confuse love with material organisation, in Bataille's view, alluding to the idea that a man owns his wife. On the other hand, he claims, men turn towards prostitutes, often leading to a life of crime and laziness. He is wary of the two extremes: too much discipline or too little.

> The life of the underworld is not to be envied. It has lost a certain vital resilience without which humanity could sink too low. All it does is exploit a complete loss of self-control, unimaginatively and in a way that minimises apprehension for the future. Having submitted unrestrainedly to the pleasure of losing self-control it has made lack of control into a constant state with neither savour nor interest." (244)

This passage demonstrates that Bataille is not proposing that humans ought to attempt a life outside the law. But neither does he propose we abide by all the taboos set in place so that we can live a morally superior existence by transcending our carnality. He proposes a kind of middle way between mysticism and eroticism; good and evil; word and flesh; life and death.

> If my reasoning has been followed it will be apparent that with intentions and key images analogous in both spheres, a mystical impulse of thought may always set off involuntarily the same reflex that an erotic image would. If this is so the converse must also be true. (247-248)

In Bataille's view the mystical and the erotic are both felt in the genitals: they are both embodied experiences. Images, objects or people can set off a chain of unexpected feelings in both domains, suggesting that erotic experience and mystical experience are the same type of experience. Each is deeply sensual, but one is supposed to be spiritual, and thus mental, whereas the other is corporeal, but nonetheless a type of conscious awareness. I will now examine Bataille's claims that experience can not be reduced to a type of knowledge.

Bataille turns to a discussion of eroticism and its lack of place in philosophy.

> My starting point is that eroticism is a solitary activity. At the least it is a matter difficult to discuss. For not only conventional reasons, eroticism is defined by secrecy. It cannot be public. I might instance some exceptions but somehow eroticism is outside ordinary life. In our experience taken as a whole it is cut off from the normal communication of emotions. There is a taboo in force... The philosopher can speak of everything he feels. Erotic experience will commit us to silence. (252)

I have shown above that Bataille conceives of eroticism as a particularly human version of sexuality in which there is a death of self-consciousness

and a sense of vitality. It is particularly human because we have self-knowledge and, with that knowledge we learn how to control our impulses and desires. Unlike bees, we know when we take risks and we can think through the consequences. Philosophy is the discipline through which we understand these processes. But, in Bataille's view, there is something about the intensity of erotic experience which defies philosophical analysis.

He says, philosophers can speak of everything we feel, whereas erotic experience commits us to silence. "I mean that it is difficult to live and to philosophise simultaneously." In Bataille's view, philosophising is one experience among many others: "philosophy is the sum of the possibles in the sense of a synthesis, or nothing." (254) With Hegel in mind, Bataille claims that "Eroticism can only be envisaged dialectically, and conversely the dialectician, if he does not confine himself to formalism, necessarily has his eyes fixed on his own sexual experience." (254) Seeing eroticism dialectically, as Hegel does, leads to a denial of experience because of a valuation of formalism, or abstract ideas over immediate experiences. The experiences need to be sublated into a higher form. Seeing eroticism dialectically, as Bataille does, leads to the silence of having experiences when there is nothing left to say about them. In Bataille's view, Hegel's approach *values* experiences negatively in relation to positive concepts. Hegel promotes having lots of ideas as though having experiences were a bad thing.

According to Bataille, Hegel's vision of the dialectic is drawn from theology. His theological influences promote a vision of life through the word, at the expense of the flesh. Hegel's system thus overemphasises discipline in order to diminish the reality of lived experiences.

> But Hegel's practically impenetrable system, even if it were the ultimate in philosophy, certainly has this quality of specialised discipline. It assembles ideas, but at the same

> time cuts those assembled ideas off from experience. That no doubt was his ambition, for in Hegel's mind the immediate is bad, and Hegel would certainly have identified what I call experience with the immediate. (255)

In Bataille's view, Hegel is a master of abstraction who promotes a life in which experience is shunned. The synthesis of the dialectic is "a speech delivered in successive phases" at the expense of the experiences of each moment. Experience is subordinated to speech in Hegel's dialectic.

Bataille draws a distinction between "working time" and "sacred time." Philosophy is work, in his view.

> That is to say that it excludes without even deigning to notice them the moments of intense emotion I referred to earlier. Hence it is not that sum of the possibles seen as a synthesising operation that I take to be of cardinal value. It is not the sum of the possibles, the sum of possible experiences, but only the sum of certain well-defined experiences aimed at knowledge. It is only the sum of knowledge. With a clear conscience, even with a feeling of getting rid of a foreign body, getting rid of some muck, or at least of a source of error, it leaves out the intense emotion bound up with birth, with the creation of life as with death. (258-259)

Philosophy is work because it is another kind of productive enterprise. Part of the productivity entails getting rid of that which is deemed unnecessary. Everything aims towards knowledge, to the extent that Hegel says that everything can be known. But, Hegel leaves out the compossibility of having knowledge and having intense experiences surrounding life and death. (We have seen already what Hegel does: he delegates women to be bearers of all experience so that men can get on with the progressive tasks associated with philosophy and with knowledge.) Knowledge as such is a putting to death, in Bataille's view, with the sum of knowledge only ever accounting for "certain well-defined experiences" in the face of denial of the "muck" of human existence from which we only think we can escape.

Bataille suggests that the reduction of all experience to the status of knowledge is a kind of category mistake.

> All the time the mind, the brain of man is reduced to the state of a container overflowing with, burst by its contents - like a suitcase into which objects keep being put which stops being a suitcase in the end, since it ceases to enclose the objects entrusted to it. And above all, extreme states bring an element that cannot be subjected to calm reflection into the sum of the possibles. (259-260)

In Bataille's view, the mind is not a thing to be filled and thoughts are not things to put somewhere. Nor are experiences simply the "objects" in opposition to the knowing subject, as though these objects can be somehow preserved in immature stages of conceptual development. In experience, he argues, we are in a process of being "beside ourselves" which is not "working time," but "sacred time." He continues:

> The fact of remaining open to possibilities bordering on madness (which is what happens with any possibilities concerned with eroticism, with the threat, or more often the presence, of death, or with sanctity) keeps the work of reflection continually subordinate to something else, and just here reflection comes to an end. (260)

Reflection is subordinate to ideas about experiences, not to the experiences themselves. Being open to the experiences of life and death requires that we feel these experiences to the core, as they produce a sharp ache throughout our body. The pain stops us from being able to focus on abstract reflections, instead planting us in a moment of worldly existence. But such "sacred time" blocks our headspace so that we are unable to work: no longer productive. Having experiences of such an intense nature gets in the way of philosophy because we are unable to concentrate on the ideas which help us to discipline our work. Moreover, moving into the experience causes all reflection to cease while we are immersed in the vitality of the moment. Reflection

returns, of course, after the experience, but Bataille warns that over-indulgence in experiences can lead to some kind of madness because the self-control is lost and with that goes inner speech.[75]

"More often than not we forget that philosophy is as competitive as any game" says Bataille, lamenting the fact that experiences make us silent. Thinking about experiences is not the same as having them and his point is that he needs to take time away from philosophy to have experiences. But the competitive nature of the game leaves him disadvantaged if he has not also produced ideas.

> In agreeing to compete I have personally found it necessary to accept the difficulties of both paths, the path of transgression as well as the path of work. The limit occurs when it is plainly impossible to respond in both directions at the same time. (261)

The limit of philosophy, in Bataille's view, is that we can chatter about experiences as much as we like, but to do so is not the same as feeling them. And we cannot do both at once: we cannot congeal experiences into thoughts because experiences of the intensity Bataille is writing about leave us silent. The dialectical synthesis in Hegel's philosophy nevertheless suggests that the experiences are the objects of thought which sit somewhere in our minds in opposition to ourselves as subjects. Bataille disagrees. Experiences are not

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[75]Bataille proposes a transgression of philosophy. An erotic transgression of the canon? Perhaps having a stripper at a philosophy paper, as Patricia Petersen did at the *Australasian Association of Philosophers* conference. (1998) As a member of the audience I noticed a certain silence which struck the audience: particularly among some of the men who were solicited to remove pieces of the stripper's clothing, their chattering minds stilled, momentarily, by the silent but nonetheless evident sensations stirring their bodies. I wondered at the time whether this is the kind of transgression Bataille is suggesting.

objects: they are experiences of the subject "beside ourselves;" the felt impressions which cannot be reduced to inner speech.

"Eroticism is silence, I have said; it is solitude. But not for people whose very presence in the world is a pure denial of silence, a chattering, a neglect of potential solitude." (264) The solitary body delimits the experience as one's own. The experiences of eroticism are not a form of knowledge because they are part of that body. They can only be experienced in solitude, even though they can be known by anyone. There is nothing more to say through having the experience, leaving Bataille silent.

It could be said that Bataille is arguing from a privileged standpoint – the standpoint of having erotic experiences – without claiming to have special knowledge. All he knows is that experience silences him; is sacred. He does not claim special authority, suggesting instead that philosophers take time out to have a few such experiences. The privilege is not epistemic and does not grant him epistemic authority.

Bataille's standpoint on experience is both similar to and different from Hartsock's. The similarities lie in the Marxian theme: reflecting on situated experiences gives a different perspective. The experiences of subsistence; of life; of species being remind us about what it is like to have a body, among other things. Eroticism, manual labour, pregnancy, birthing, menstruation, illness, nursing, childcare, laughter, anguish, travelling in a foreign country - or somehow else being launched into a moment of experience - gives us the opportunity to see things differently. But there are not just two points of view: masculine/feminine; ruling class/working class; white/"other;" straight/gay; man/woman. Nor is there any special knowledge to be gained by claiming to be a particular kind of person having a particular kind of experience. Experience shatters the coagulated categories of identity and

multiplies each according to the particularity of a single body, in a specific place at a specific time, among others who together embody a host of standards and practices by which they abide. The knowledge is to be found in their agreement about what counts as true in a general sense, and anyone can have that. The similarities between Hartsock and Bataille are already lost in her claim that women have a privileged standpoint just because they are women.[76]

Bataille makes possible the idea that intensity of experience is potentially universal. It is possible that the woman giving birth shares something of the intensity of her experience with someone experiencing severe pain from another cause. She may also share something with someone engaged in erotic practices, as well as with those who have religious experiences. The shared fact is not a matter of locating the experience as a particular experience because that is to move back into inner speech and to start chattering – to lose the moment in a shift from experience. From Bataille's perspective experience is silent precisely because there is death of the chatter.

Hartsock commits a fascinating error in her claims about masculine perversity. The curious fact emerges in Bataille's discussion of the parallel between erotic experience and mysticism. The silence of experience is usually associated with femininity, especially maternity, and is an important theme in this thesis. *Jouissance,* as Lacan and Kristeva put it; private knowledge in

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[76]When it is knowledge about experience, how it feels for an individual, we are inquiring about a particular biochemical system. Hormones may play a role, but when it comes to feeling, the essential elements are going to be proportions of various transmitters. Serotonin and other such endorphins play a role in experience and it is more likely these will produce the final effect than any hormones.

Young's view; immanence, for de Beauvoir. Self and world merge; subject and object are indistinct: there can be no knowledge. This is the self experiencing her body in its intensity, in birth for instance. In intense experiences, Bataille argues, we do not experience our bodies as "object," or as "subject." Instead, we are divided between experience (which takes over the whole body and mind; not just the torso) and knowledge (which is located by the chattering in the head; not by the eyes). The whole idea of experiences as objects in opposition to knowing subjects is like the idea of stuffing the mind as though it were a suitcase; misguided. For, in experience, the feeling of corporeality is less a mode of thought than a mode of existence. Being present to a mode of existence requires taking time out from thinking. Perversity is not a mode of abstract consciousness at all: perversity is outside the law precisely because it does not entail thinking; and thought is always guided by speech.

Experience will not necessarily add new ideas to a philosophy bent on numbers, but will add different perspectives on ideas. Bataille claims that language tends to take us out of the world of practice: too much thinking makes us numb, like the psycho-zombies described earlier.

Humans are not zombies, in Bataille's view, indicating that anyone who experiences the intensity of life and death will know. Bataille's characterisation of experience as non-knowledge draws our attention to the relationship between philosophy and that which Hegel associates with femininity. Hegel claims that ministering to the intensely experienced moments of life and death is women's duty. Bataille draws the association

between experience and mysticism, which is also associated with femininity and maternity.[77]

The problem with gendered knowledge is that women are understood only to have one "kind" of knowledge, whereas men are understood only to have another "kind." The two kinds are divided, by the psychological phenomenologist who peers into her or his own mind to "see" what is going on. Women claim to see more experiences than men; men claim to see more ideas than women. But when women start arguing that our experiences give us special knowledge we bark up the wrong tree. For, as Bataille says, experiences are not knowledge and we do need to take time out from philosophising about them so we can have them.

We have no more to say about our experiences except that we have had one, so it is not having new experiences that counts. But we can bring in a new perspective on an old topic. The topic of zombies is old enough, but the maternal perspective is new. Mothers know that we are not zombies because we have these experiences and, even though we may not add to the "suitcase of ideas," we have a kind of silent authority. Experience is not knowledge,

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[77] Kristeva argues that maternity is represented by the figure of Virgin Mary: silent, head bowed, martyr, mother of God. (1983: 234-263) The self in this discourse is "an impossible elsewhere, a sacred beyond, a vessel of divinity, a spiritual tie with the ineffable godhead." (1980:301) This is the subject who has conscious awareness but whose awareness is not linguistic. Maternity is like the mystical fusion of the self with one's experience. Awareness of the experience engulfs speech, rendering the experience ineffable because the experiences silence the mother. The mystical mother cannot tell us what it is like to be pregnant, in other words, because the experience is a special sort of private knowledge.

and zombies are impossible. Hartsock does not show how we know we have experiences.

Hartsock's theory merely reinforces the gender stereotypes as though men are better at talking and abstracting whereas women have lots of experiences without having much to say about abstract entities. Men are stereotyped as disciplinarians, taking on the paternal role, and giving license to paternalism. Women are stereotyped as silent martyrs, kissing grazed knees without warning about the next accident. In psychoanalytic theory discipline is masculinized whereas silence is femininized.

Bataille's characterisation of self-discipline suggests that each parent teach her or his child how to live, not by too rigid, nor too lax, self-control. The same lesson applies to everyone, including parents, in the ongoing learning process of life, balancing work and sacred time. Experience is solitary, in Bataille's view. Each person brings a new perspective on experience, from different contexts or situations. The quality of knowledge can change with a shift of focus from quantity of knowledge.

conclusion

I have presented the details of Bataille's argument here to show that it is misleading to take a passage from his book on *Eroticism, Death and Sensuality* to support an argument that Bataille epitomises the false consciousness of masculinity. I have shown that he shares Hartsock's disdain for abstract thought at the expense of valuing experience for its own sake. He implicitly agrees with Hartsock about the nature of philosophy insofar as each claims that philosophers' ideas dominate over their individual experiences. (Hartsock, 228) Hartsock claims that such ideology is essentially masculine.

Bataille, on the other hand, claims that such ideology is based in a fundamental distrust in the human capacity for self-discipline.

Taboos are constructed, in Bataille's view, because of the human valuation of productivity, or "working time" over stillness, or "sacred time." He argues that the human animal seeks to control the world, and is able to exact control through thinking about what is possible. Philosophy is valued for the production of ideas to this end: namely, transcending what we are given through bringing to light new ways to live and new things to have. But, in Bataille's view, the very requirement to produce ideas limits our abilities to see that which is given. The discipline which is applied to focussing upon and developing ideas is simultaneously a means of controlling the mind so that there is no time to focus upon experiences. Moreover, as Bataille says, the intense experiences of life, eroticism and death make it very difficult to think clearly about abstract ideas.

Bataille draws our attention to the Hegelian synthesis as a mode of explaining away the silent solitude of our corporeality. The assembly of ideas in dialectical synthesis requires focussing on ideas as much to discipline oneself as to gather together the threads of a coherent explanation. The discipline of staying with ideas requires that the thinker does not dwell upon experiences. "It assembles ideas, but at the same time cuts those assembled ideas off from experience...for in Hegel's mind the immediate is bad, and Hegel would certainly have identified what I call experience with the immediate." (Bataille, 255) Experiences are evaluated as "bad" and ideas are evaluated as "good." The evaluations are drawn, in turn, from theological dialecticians: flesh is "bad" and the word is "good." Experiences of the flesh must be disciplined according to the word of god. Taboos are invented, and transgressions of these taboos punished with nothing short than death. But

death, in this religious context, is the recognition of the finitude of this life without promise of an afterlife. Moreover, the figurative death - the death of inner speech and thus self control - gives life precisely because experiences drive to the core of our felt existence.

So it is ironic that Hartsock paints a picture of Bataille as the perverse individual who goes around in a discontinuous void of self-certainty, nonetheless threatened by the women he violates and kills so easily. I do not see Bataille in this light.[78] He does not recommend that anyone violate another person and shows disdain towards those who give "free rein to a huge and squalid derision." (243) He does not condone laziness, stealing or killing to stay alive, seeing such as "basically a question of a revolting lowering of standards, of a vulgar abortiveness." (244) Such a way of living lacks a certain vitality, he says, "without which humanity could sink too low. All it does is exploit a complete loss of self-control, unimaginatively and in a way that minimises apprehension for the future." (244) Lack of self-control is unsavoury and uninteresting, in Bataille's view. Self control, on the other hand, is brought about through balancing "working time" with "sacred time."

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[78] To be sure, it is well known that he was involved in a secret society *acephale* (headless). The group wanted to perform a public sacrifice, it is said, but no one was prepared to kill, even though there were plenty who offered to be the sacrificial victim.

Chapter Six:

subjective authority and childbirth

In the course of this thesis I have spelled out the issues arising from the Cartesian and Hegelian conceptions of first person authority in pregnancy. For both Descartes or Hegel, and for their many contemporary successors, having an experience counts as having knowledge, albeit ineffable knowledge. From both Cartesian and Hegelian perspectives, subjective knowledge is cognitive but immature in relation to objective knowledge. The pregnant woman's authority is private, deeply subjective and open to scepticism, suggesting that there are more objective ways to know about pregnancy than from the woman's point of view. So, according to both Cartesian and Hegelian philosophy, the pregnant woman has first person authority, but this kind of authority carries less epistemic weight than the more objective scientific knowledge about pregnancy.

I have presented four distinct feminist conceptions of the pregnant woman's knowledge. Iris Marion Young and Nancy Hartsock, I have argued, repeat the Cartesian and Hegelian error of making sensory awareness a cognitive foundation for all other knowledge. This raises insuperable epistemic problems inherited from Cartesian metaphysics of mind-body interaction in which these views are ultimately grounded. Simone de Beauvoir and Julia Kristeva each challenge the cognitive status of that kind of primitive experience in Hegel's phenomenology. I have shown that their distinction between the cognitive and non-cognitive dimensions of experience provides a much more promising framework for theorizing this kind of first-person experience and the knowledge to which it gives rise.

In chapter two I introduced Wilfrid Sellars' *myth of the given* as a way of spelling out the distinction between non-cognitive awareness in experience and cognitive awareness of experiences as the kinds of experiences that they are. Experience does not stand as authoritative, in Sellars' view, unless we can accurately describe both the experience and the standards and practices that make the description justified or unjustified. Sellars' myth of Jones explains why first person knowledge is epistemically of a piece with any other knowledge. Sellars does not deny that we have experiences; he denies instead that we can know anything about these without also having a conceptual framework through which to understand our experiences. Developing such a conceptual framework requires shared observations of behavioural evidence in correlation with different kinds of experiences.

In this chapter I will argue that the pregnant woman is in a better position to develop such a conceptual framework through which to understand the subjective experiences of pregnancy and birthing than male obstetricians. In order to do so I will turn my attention to the experiences of birthing as demonstrated in some surveys by Italian feminist philosopher of language Marina Sbisá. Her surveys show that authority over birthing sits squarely within the medical domain, to the detriment of a birthing woman's perspective on the experience. Her interviews with the birthing woman suggest that those who take seriously this medical authority tend to accept the stereotypes of femininity implicit within medical discourse, sometimes making the experience more devastating than it is for the woman who is more active in her birthing experiences. These generalisations are made with care, in the recognition that there are unique aspects for every woman in her experiences of pregnancy and birthing.

In section two I review some problems associated with self knowledge in Hilary Kornblith's account of *what it is like to be me.* Some people, he argues, are not good at making first person observations because they do not realise these are learnt in the same manner that we learn about anything. This line of argument reinforces the need for an intersubjective conceptual framework in order even for self-knowledge to develop. But, I will argue, we can recover some useful insights from Hegel and Hartsock, *viz.*, that (some) women are more competent (in the western world) in learning to observe their own experiences than (many) men. To be sure, these competencies rest upon intersubjective achievements, but because of their close association with embodied women's experience, are more available to women than to male medical practitioners. While those women who are not already competent at making first person observations are not going to be much help in creating a new theory about what it is like to give birth, these more competent women might well be.

In section three I will discuss Bataille's account of *sovereignty*. Sovereign experience is non-cognitive and can be brought into cognition later with the use of the indexical. I shall also draw some conclusions based in Bataille's account of non-productive expenditure (chapter five). The domain of childbirth is clearly situated in the institutions of the family and of medicine. As Bataille argues, standard accounts of these institutions leave out some important aspects of experience on the understanding that these are unproductive, uncivilised and deleterious to productivity and accumulation. Moreover, as Kristeva argues, the denial of embodied experience leads to major depression and violence within western capitalist societies. Utilising Bataille's and Kristeva's insights we can reconceptualise the family, medicine, pregnancy and the status of women's knowledge of pregnancy and childbirth.

i Knowing about childbirth

In a paper published in *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, Marina Sbisá discusses her survey of medical textbooks about pregnancy and childbirth.(1996) Sbisá recommends that a *feminine point of view* on birthing be developed to counter the rhetoric of the medical discourse on the subject. She argues that the pregnant woman is directed to change her behaviour to fit the feminine stereotype and to prepare her for maternity. So, the medical domain of birthing is important, not only for safe birthing, but also in preparing the woman for her role as a mother in the institution of the family.

Sbisá is a professional philosopher of language whose interest in childbirth develops through personal experience in both birthing and the women's movement. (1996:363) Her interest in the "cognitive and communicative aspects" of childbirth, leads to the examination of 34 books on childbirth, published between 1960 and 1995. Sbisá examines the manner in which each text addresses the reader as a pregnant woman and finds that the pregnant woman is frequently described as passive in relation to her birthing body, as though she has no control over that body. Sbisá aims to present a more constructive vision of birthing, as I will explain shortly.

In her survey, Sbisá finds that the pregnant woman is overwhelmingly addressed in *"exercitive speech acts."* She defines these as commanding control of the situation, not only because these speech acts include "advice, commands, recommendations, exhortations, prohibitions, permissions;" but because they further "presuppose a speaker who is 'one-up', thus assigning some kind of obligation to the addressee in order to channel her behaviour." (366) These kinds of speech acts are interesting insofar as they have a role in prescribing how women *ought to* behave during their pregnancy and birthing

experiences: the subsequent behaviour being demonstrably observed as *feminine*. The use of this kind of speech act is supposed to help the pregnant woman understand the processes of her own body, but in so doing compels the woman to listen to the voice of the experts. Moreover, there is expectation that the woman aligns herself with the goals of the speaker, perhaps at the expense of her own goals.

Sbisá outlines two kinds of "persuasive strategies" in medical textbooks, noting a difference between more orthodox samples and those which encourage active involvement from the birthing woman. The more orthodox samples de-legitimise any prior knowledge the woman has, expecting the pregnant woman to accept the promise that the textbook will make her competent. The pregnant woman must erase any unsuitable information from other sources and recreate herself according to higher command. (367)

The less orthodox authors persuade the woman to focus on psychological states with provisional suggestions about how they might be feeling. In Sbisá's view, however, this psychological approach "implies that [the pregnant woman] must be anxious or worried and that the author (as well as professionals taking care of the reader) is capable of eliminating the causes of her anxiety." (367) The focus on psychology is normative because it tells the pregnant woman what she ought to be feeling.[79]

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[79] Her sample includes writers like Janet Balaskas, Sheila Kitzinger and Frédérick Leboyer, each of whom is critical of the orthodox medical model of childbirth, but does not include books about homebirths, because of its marginal status in Italy. The availability of homebirth in Australia is also marginalised, representing around one percent of births.

But there is more than a theory about speech acts informing Sbisá's interpretation of the normative function of medical texts in childbirth. Sbisá draws her readers' attention to the feminist conclusions that can be drawn.

> As for the representations of the object under consideration (the woman through pregnancy and childbirth), the books convey to varying degrees some to the classic stereotypes of femininity: weakness, fragility, unreliability, passivity, self-sacrificing motherly love. Such stereotypes are transmitted to the reader by means of a seemingly descriptive notion of nature which is actually normative. (367)

In other words, the texts appeal to the woman's sense of herself as feminine, encouraging her to adopt a passive stance in relation to her doctor. Descriptions of the woman's attitudes and behaviour in pregnancy and birthing spell out specific natural responses, making clear that anything different is deviant and abnormal. In wanting to be safe, the birthing woman is compelled to conduct herself as properly feminine. She must, in order to placate the medical authorities in whose hands she is placed, defer to them, and subordinate her own views. So long as the stereotypes are implicit in these texts, she argues, it is clear that "all this is not enough to guarantee that during pregnancy and childbirth women can constitute themselves and be socially recognized as subjects." (370) In Sbisá's view, the use of stereotypes and exercitive speech acts prevents the pregnant woman from actively constituting an important experience in her life *for herself.* Instead, medical discourse on pregnancy and birthing reproduce the stereotypes of feminine consciousness which suggest that a mother cannot have any proper self knowledge, ever. The role of these medical texts in creating the woman-as-mother is insightful; particularly when we identify the metaphysics which informs the medical approach to the woman's subjectivity.

Sbisá claims that:

> Three of the stereotypes conveyed are weakness, fragility and unreliability. The female body is weak, its energy is barely sufficient for the task of childbearing. It has to be helped. The woman's mind is weak too, so she tends to influenced by pre-scientific and superstitious discourse and become discouraged in the face of difficult situations. *During pregnancy, she is in a state of psychological regression: more like a child than an adult.* (367) [My emphasis.]

The idea that the body is weak and needs to be helped reflects a Cartesian view that the body is both distinct from and subordinate to the mind. The weakness of the woman's mind, especially as psychologically immature, indicates the clouded confusion of sensual states as though these prevent the woman from making competent judgments. The maternal body must thus be controlled through the woman's mind, but that mind itself is in turn subordinate to that of the male authority. In Hegelian terms, the woman has regressed to *sense-certainty*. The Hegelian family in which the husband supplies reason to his juvenile wife is replicated in the context of modern childbirth.

Ideas about the forces of nature acting on the machine are also implicit in childbirth discourse. Sbisá claims, agreeing with Carolyn Merchant's analysis of *the death of nature*,[80] that the mechanistic view "reveals itself as a product

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[80]Merchant (1980) argues that the scientific revolution sets the precedent for viewing the body as a machine, and fails to account for the subjective aspects of life. She promotes vitalism as a viable alternative to the mechanistic view, drawing from the ideas of Leibniz, van Helmont and Ann Conway. I do not agree that vitalism explains anything and think that Sellars provides a better alternative for understanding how the body can be viewed mechanistically without

of male-dominated modern Western culture." (368-369) The implicit Cartesian dualism against which both Merchant and Sbisá react concedes that there may be a vital spirit, or ghost in the machine; but as mediated through Hegel, is committed to the view the embodied processes of childbirth make the spirit temporarily unavailable, or at any rate, degrade its rationality. This distinction between mind and body serves the institution of medicine well, even if it does a serious disservice to women.

Sbisá's interviews with twenty pregnant women demonstrate that medical discourse does not necessarily help the woman deal with the subjective experiences of birthing.[81] Those who take seriously the medical advice are more likely to cope with birthing by withdrawing from the body and moving "on to a more mental or spiritual level from which the labour can, hopefully, be controlled." Their expectations of the experience are low, being "keen to forget childbirth soon." They are not always successful in trying to forget the violent nature of their experience, perhaps feeling humiliated as a result. A quarter of the interviewees adopted a second, more demanding coping strategy "aimed at 'living' childbirth rather than merely 'surviving' it." The women adopting this strategy were more active in the process, seeing self and body as united. These women felt they had more power in their experiences, giving more positive and realistic evaluations than those adopting the passive strategy. According to Sbisá, then, the majority of women

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dispensing of the important element of subjective experience. For discussions of the problems with vitalism see Tim Crane (1998), and Crawford Elder (1981).

interviewed followed doctors orders to survive the ordeal. I will argue in my conclusion that this attitude supports an ideology of childbirth as a mode of production rather than as a valuable life experience from which we have the potential to learn more about ourselves as individuals and more about humanity in general.

Sbisá indicates that each woman has the ability to learn about herself as a subject by reflecting upon her experiences in childbirth. She concludes that there is no special "woman's point of view" on childbirth.

> The feminine point of view on childbirth turns out to be something which cannot be discovered, but is constructed by each individual woman in her effort to approach childbirth as a subject situated within the labouring body. (372)

The different responses from the participants in the same socio-cultural context demonstrates, as Spelman has also argued, that there is no distinctively feminine viewpoint, no standpoint shared by all females. (372) Sbisá recommends that such a perspective *could* be developed to counter the medical discourse. She argues (373) that the preverbal awareness of such phenomena as pregnancy and childbirth could inform a feminine perspective, and that this needs to be explored in more detail to show that medical discourse effectively prevents the pregnant woman from creating her own point of view. Suggesting that females have "preverbal awareness" of our bodies which is different from males' awareness certainly runs the risk of essentialising women. But Sbisá argues that this risk is avoided through acknowledgment that social recognition completes the process of constructing

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[81]Each woman is interviewed in the final term of pregnancy and a month after the birth; with thirteen of these women attending a third interview over one year later. Each story is quite different, indicating the deeply personal nature of birthing.

any particular feminine point of view and so that a multiplicity of such views is inevitable despite a common core of experience. The other edge of this sword, however, is the fact that inasmuch as the creation of a female perspective on birthing is inadequate until medicine and other social institutions recognise the subjective authority of the pregnant woman a great deal of female identity is still mis-constructed, and women are denied agency in their own self-definition. Medicine is central in this disenfranchisement. Sbisá suggests this kind of social recognition is some way off. (374)

Although I agree with most of Sbisá's claims, I reject any possibility of taking the experience of birthing as the basis for a "feminine point of view." Constructing a new ideology as a reverse of the existing ideology does not fully redress the problem of authority. I think it is dangerous to make any universal claims about the nature of women's feminine experiences for risk of establishing relationships based in privilege. Those of us who have mastered the required epistemic skills adopt a position of power in relation to those who have not. The idea of liberating women as a group, as Spelman has argued persuasively, goes out the window when we smooth over the differences between women by creating a universal feminine perspective on anything.[82]

The important issue here is not who counts as the makers of *feminine knowledge*, but who counts as the makers of any *self-knowledge*. The answer is not "anyone who has the experience," but rather "anyone who has *both* the experience and the requisite understanding of subjectivity." The experience of about childbirth will not enter into knowledge or be in any sense authoritative until we develop a conceptual framework through which to

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[82] See my discussion of Spelman's claims about *Inessential Woman* in chapter four.

take up non-cognitive experience and represent it in cognitive episodes. There is no guarantee that there is any *uniquely* adequate framework, and so guarantee that there is any single female standpoint, even if any such standpoint is grounded in uniquely female events of childbirth and pregnancy. On the other hand, it is clear from Sbisá's research and analysis of the educational texts available to the pregnant woman that obstetricians do not take seriously any of the knowledge of the pregnant and birthing woman, and it is high time that this knowledge is recognised.

A possible reply to this line of reasoning is that, according to the Sellarsian view that has grounded my analysis, there is no principled epistemic difference between first and third person claims about experience. Therefore the male obstetrician can well be in a position of authority over both the objective and experiential facts of birthing. After all, he may have much greater experience of this process than *any* single pregnant or birthing woman. This reply, however, is plausible only if we fail to acknowledge the important distinction between the non-cognitive and cognitive dimensions of experience.

The problem is not that obstetricians fail entirely to take seriously women's subjective states. When the birthing woman makes the subjective claim that she feels pain the obstetrician takes seriously this claim, and recognises the woman's authority by administering pain relief. But the recognition of the reality of her pain through administration of analgesia fails to endorse fully the pregnant woman's epistemic authority. For the pain report can itself be seen as a mere *symptom*, or an *expression* of pain, much as a cry, or a sweat might be interpreted. The woman expresses her pain; the physician knows it. The physician makes the final determination regarding whether analgesia is appropriate, and if so, how much.

Savage (19xx) reports a situation in which a birthing woman tried to refuse analgesia, and to which Savage responds "I've seen more labours than you." Later the woman complained that the administration of pain relief had interfered with the rhythm of labour, which she had thought was progressing quite well. In discussing this case, Savage also notes that male obstetricians have difficulty identifying their own emotional responses to painful situations, and that decisions regarding pain management are often made more in their own best interest than in the interest of the birthing woman. Part of the moral of the myth of Jones is that knowledge of our own inner episodes requires both experience and conceptualization and that this knowledge is of a piece with our knowledge of other's inner states. But the other side of this moral is that our claims about the inner states of others must give way to others' claims about their own inner states where their conceptual abilities are intact and where their observational proximity to their own states is better than ours. If there are inner episodes to which male obstetricians can never be privy, they would do well to defer to thoughtful women.

The advantage of Sellars' view lies in the recognition that while the pregnant woman's experiences are non-cognitive and can only be known if she already has a vocabulary with which to describe her experiences as *theoretical episodes,* experiencing them may nonetheless be necessary conditions of observational knowledge of states of that kind. Sellars' view leaves open a space for the woman to create new knowledge in agreement with others who have experiences in the domain of pregnancy and birthing. Sellars thus opens up a space for first person authority based in public agreement between those in a position to have first person knowledge about the domain of pregnancy and birthing.

In summary, then, the medical discourse about childbirth fails to recognise that feelings, sensations and emotions are conceptual episodes, and that women have access to the relevant conceptual space and fails as well to recognize that they are observables, and that they themselves may be precluded from the perspective from which they can be observed. There is hence no acknowledgement in medical discourse of the authority of women over their own maternal experience. Sbisá is dead right to think we each make our own self knowledge, with qualifications as I show in the next section.

ii. First person authority: some problems

In this section I turn to Hilary Kornblith's warning that sometimes we do not know ourselves as well as we think that we do. Kornblith emphasises the importance of learning about our own states in the same way that we learn about external objects: via the third person route of shared observations. Kornblith clears the terrain for my argument that the pregnant and birthing woman has closer proximity to the non-cognitive states of that domain, making her more qualified to make the kinds of observations I am recommending, if and only if she is already competent in observing non-cognitive states.

In *"What is it like to be Me?"* Kornblith (1998) argues against the Cartesian vision of a "conceptual tie between being in a [mental or psychological] state and believing that one is in it" in favour of a "realistic claim...that mental states are radically independent of beliefs about them." (49) Kornblith thus agrees with Sellars that psychological states are non-cognitive in relation to the cognitive content of our beliefs about these states. This, I contend, is an important step towards recognising that the pregnant

woman's experiences are not immature or regressive, nor are they a version of feminine knowledge.

Kornblith makes his point about subjective knowledge by comparing two (imaginary) persons, Jack and Mary. "Jack is very defensive. He is quite insecure, and he believes, incorrectly that people are talking down to him." (50) But Jack, falsely, does not believe himself to display these character traits. He has a distorted view of both himself and of the world. (51) His beliefs are distorted to such an extent that Jack does not have authority about his mental life even though he does have "a perspective on his mental life which others lack." So, although Jack has the advantage of being closer to his non-cognitive states than any other person, he lacks the cognitive tools which are necessary to interpret these states. Jack's first person knowledge is not authoritative.

Kornblith's point is that Jack's self-knowledge is produced less by his special relationship to his own mind (as Descartes assumes) than by his prior knowledge (as Sellars argues). "Jack's understanding of himself, at every level, must be just as mediate, corrigible, and theory laden as our understanding of Jack." (52) Jack does not have any privileged self knowledge so "[t]here is not even the smallest grain of truth to be found in Descartes' claim of deep epistemological asymmetry between our understanding of our own mental lives and our understanding of other things." (52) Kornblith's vision of Jack supports Sellars' view that we each need to learn how to read off the world, including reading off our bodies and the people around us.[83] As I have already stated, this view requires making the distinction between having non-cognitive states, and having the cognitive skills by which we

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[83] For a more detailed discussion of the Sellarsian vision of epistemic authority see chapter two.

learn how to interpret these states. Jack does not have the requisite cognitive skills, preventing him from accurately interpreting his own states.

Mary, on the other hand, is "the kind of character to get Cartesian intuitions flowing." (53) (Kornblith's Mary is not Jackson's Mary). She is not defensive, insecure, or paranoid that others are talking about her; nor does she "systematically misperceive others' intentions." Kornblith makes clear that Mary's access to her own states is phenomenologically similar to her access to non-inferential observations of things in the world. "Mary doesn't seem to infer that there is a book on the table," for example, but this is because she "had to learn what a book typically looks like, in order to gain the discriminatory capacity to recognize books." (54) In other words, Mary appears to know immediately that there is a book on the table without having to ponder the inferences by which she draws this conclusion.

Kornblith says that "Mary's judgments about the world around her are quite accurate, unlike Jack's, and her level of self-understanding is quite high as well. She sees herself, to a very large degree, for what she is." (53) The reason for Mary's competence in interpreting her non-cognitive states is traced to her childhood education about self-knowledge.

> She was, as a child, taught to understand the difference between anger and fear and other unpleasant emotions. Now, as an adult, the process of recognizing her mental states is so internalized that it too has become phenomenologically simple. And like her ability to recognize various states of the external world, Mary is quite reliable on a wide range of such discriminatory tasks. Her judgments about many of her mental states, like her judgments about many states of the external world, tend to be correct. (54)

Moreover, Mary's self-understanding "seems direct" because Mary has had plenty of time to get to know herself. "Mary doesn't have to think about what is going on in her own mind; she can just tell." (53) Her interpretation of

feelings, moods and other non-cognitive states appears simple and immediate because of her competent training to observe both inner and outer objects when she was young.

Others do not have the same degree of access to Mary's mind as Mary has to her own, suggesting her authority about her own mental states is warranted. But Mary's access to her mental states is not immediate in the Cartesian sense, in which having a state gives her the knowledge about the state as the kind of state it is. Rather, her knowledge is immediate in the Sellarsian sense: she has learnt to identify her states as the kind of states they are and over time the process has become simple. Jack, on the other hand, does not recognise his own states because he has not learnt to identify these on the assumption that he does not need to. The access to the states as the kinds of states they are is impossible without the required education. Both Jack and Mary have a first person perspective on their mental lives, but unlike Jack's perspective, Mary's is usually accurate precisely because she knows how to interpret her non-cognitive states and he does not.

The accuracy of Mary's judgments about her own states in relation to the inaccuracy of Jack's gives her an epistemological advantage which cannot be explained by the causal proximity each has to their states: both Mary and Jack have the same degree of causal proximity to their states but only Mary is epistemically reliable. (55) Kornblith says

> Because the difference between a first-person perspective and a third-person perspective is a matter of causal proximity, it is comparable to the difference between looking at a person from across a table and from across a street: closer is, frequently, better. Moreover, once we recognize that the advantages of the first-person perspective, when it does constitute an advantage, come from the causal proximity of a person to her own mental states, it becomes clear that this is not an

> advantage which tracks the distinction between mental and physical even in the typical case. (55)

Kornblith points out that any non-cognitive states of perception are insufficient to explain the mind as distinct from the body and world precisely because these states are uninformative without interaction with other persons in the world. "The mental qua mental thus does not offer us any special epistemic advantages." So, without a theory about the mental states encountered in childbirth, the pregnant and birthing woman is none the wiser.

Mary is in a better position to observe the birthing woman and to describe the subjective states experienced in the process. If she were to give birth herself, Mary's epistemic competence makes her more authoritative than someone less competent. It is also worth noting that our contemporary culture constructs masculinity and femininity very differently, and that the norms governing those gender constructions make it the case—contingently, to be sure, but nonetheless actually—that men and women develop different degrees of emotional and relational knowledge. In developed Western cultures women generally have better developed emotional and relational knowledge than men. Despite this fact, and despite the fact that this kind of knowledge is important in understanding pregnancy and birthing, medical discourse dismisses the advantage of having this kind of subjective competence in birthing.

Jack, on the other hand, is not the sort of person we would want to enter the obstetric profession. His judgments about his own temperament indicate the flaws in his judgments about others. Again, given the construction of masculinity in many contemporary Western cultures, men are less likely to develop the kind of introspective self-knowledge I am discussing here. This

kind of knowledge must be learnt, and the encouragement necessary to learning about our inner states and about those of others is often not afforded to men, including male medical practitioners.

The fact that the mere act of introspection does not automatically grant self-knowledge leads me to two conclusions about the birthing woman's subjective knowledge. First the birthing woman is not in a position to create a new vocabulary on birthing just because she has closest causal proximity to the psychological states of birthing. Second, her creation of a new vocabulary on birthing depends on her already having reliable knowledge about her subjective states. Having this knowledge may be influenced by gender stereotypes, but I suggest that all self-knowledge is in principle not gender specific. This indicates that anyone can, at least in principle, know what it is like to give birth. But the authority for which I am searching must guarantee something over and beyond the purely cognitive dimensions of knowledge. I will explain further below.

iii. a reconception of first person authority in pregnancy and birthing

I must admit to having conducted a few interviews about birth on my own.[84] The sample is too narrow to prove anything except to say more about the kinds of subjective states women claim to have during birthing; states not generally mentioned or explained in the medical literature. One woman, a professional midwife, said birthing was the most religious experience she

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[84] These were broadcast on community radio station 2RSR (Sydney) in 1992-1993. In 1992 I attended a conference and interviewed birthing experts Janet Balaskas, Ina May Gaskin, Sheila Kitzinger and Marsden Wagner. These interviews were broadcast on community radio station 2SER (Sydney).

ever had. This intrigued me so I asked others more specifically about the mystical nature of the experience. Another woman said it was like tripping because she was experiencing a kind of altered state. And I guess my own experience was similarly that which we loosely call an altered state of consciousness.

In chapter five I introduced Bataille's analysis of the similarities between mystical and erotic experience. Each produce the same sensuous reflexes; each places us alongside ourselves rather than outside ourselves; neither can be reduced to description unless we make the category error of thinking our mind is like a suitcase stuffed full of ideas; in the experience we cease to think and are immersed in the sensations. Although there is no doubt that the experiences can be described, any attempt to do so takes us out of the non-cognitive state in which we are immersed, and the descriptions always seem inadequate. We are alone in the experience, and we do not speak, for to do so is to lose the intensity of the moment in which we are immersed. The limit identified by Bataille is not some putative ineffability, but the impossibility of being immersed in an intense experience and articulating that experience at the same time. There is always time later to think back and describe the experience, but often the words seem inadequate to express the intensity precisely because the non-cognitive dimension of experience is lost to cognition. The limit between the non-cognitive and cognitive states of mind cannot be dissolved: the non-cognitive is silent in this respect.

I think there is room to suggest that the mystical dimension of birthing is a result of the erotic or sexual nature of the experience. In my own survey of birthing I discovered that some women are encouraged to engage sexually in

the early stages of labour; to use nipple stimulation[85] and clitoral stimulation to help dilate the cervix; and to have the midwife or partner give her a perineal massage with warm oil while the baby's head crowns the vagina. The very intimate nature of birthing brings in this erotic dimension given that the woman must reveal her private parts, often to a bunch of near-strangers. There is an added transgressive dimension to birthing given that it does involve nudity, genital exposure, violent expulsions, blood, shit, piss, and muck in front of a group of near-strangers. As Ina May Gaskin[86] told me, some women claim that birthing is like defecating in public. Of course, given the cuddly images of newborn infants, this can be an unanticipated dimension of the birthing experience: some women are horrified by their loss of control.

The erotic aspects of the experience are often denied, however, and it is no wonder given the escalating litigation rate for obstetric medicine.[87] There is an unequal power relation between the doctor and the birthing woman and a perverse dimension to the domination of obstetrical knowledge by males, the

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[85] Naomi Wolf (2001) mentions her experience of being pushed into a bathroom for "nipple stim" prior to birthing. I think the way she describes the event tells us as much about the denial of the erotic dimension of birth as it reminds us of the empirical evidence that erotic stimulation works. The denial of eroticism is suggested by the fact Wolf is pushed into the bathroom, away from the comfort of the bed and her partner, to perform this stimulation with a nurse. The fact that there is any such stimulation recognises the would-be erotic dimension of the domain.

[86] In a private interview.

[87] This has become an issue in Australia because the insurance premiums have become prohibitive for independent midwives. This, of course, limits the currently limited choices available for pregnant and birthing women.

justification for which is ideological. Even when our obstetrician has the best intentions, she or he is blinded by the ideological framework of medicine. Their technical skills are not at issue here, for it is clear women benefit from these, but the instrumental means of controlling birthing does erase the woman's subjectivity.

The erotic dimensions of birthing might actually make the experience more bearable for the birthing woman under the right circumstances. (I asked a very broad minded birthing educator about orgasms in birth: she said they're rare, but she's encountered one. On the other hand, I asked a friend who is a midwife and she says that women never seemed turned on by birthing. She adds that the men in the next room sometimes masturbate because they find the sounds erotic. One woman I interviewed said that clitoral stimulation made her experience more comfortable.) Clearly the current obstetric situation is not appropriate for incorporating the erotic dimension of birthing experiences because of the power relations I have identified within that domain.

Explaining the birthing experience does not require constructing an unequal power relation on the basis of whether or not one is the kind of person who gets lost in their embodied states. Most people get lost in their embodied states from time to time. There are no claims that the subject withdraws from her body to some putative mental or spiritual plane so that someone else can control the experience. (Sbisá, p. 372) To the contrary, it is recognised that the apparently mystical nature of the experience is a non-cognitive awareness of embodiment. The awareness is "sovereign," to use Bataille's terminology, because there are times during the birth that the woman is not engaging in any cognitive processes. During these sovereign interludes there is no awareness of either the self as a self or the experience as

any particular kind of experience. The subject and object are fused as the cognitive processes temporarily shut down and the woman is lost in the non-cognitive awareness of embodiment. The woman is vulnerable when she is in this state and needs help from people she can trust to guide her through the process.

From Kornblith's analysis of self knowledge it is clear that the birthing woman will learn more about herself if she already is competent in identifying sensations, feelings and emotions as the kinds these are. But this discussion of sovereignty suggests that a woman can be better prepared for the mystical dimension of birthing by cultivating the relevant dimensions of self-knowledge. Her attitude towards sex and eroticism will determine the nature of her experience of birthing. A woman who has a history of sexual abuse, for example, may find that this history has a negative impact on an experience in which she is laid open for birthing. Without acknowledgement of this history, the birthing experience may be more traumatic than it is for the woman who does not suffer from past sexual abuse. The woman who has such a history needs to be carefully informed about how the abuse can affect her birthing experience.

On the other hand, the woman without this history may nevertheless find birthing to be a situation of sexual abuse if her caregivers abuse their position of power when she is out of control in a sovereign state. The woman's emotional strengths and weaknesses will play a part in her birthing process and her self-knowledge about these will help her and her caregivers know how to respond at times when the experience is sovereign and the woman is not in control.

Jane's birth story helps us understand what it is like to be sovereign in childbirth.

> I found myself slumped at the bottom of a deep well. Slumped over, close to death, defeated, unable to take more pain, I could go no further. When I tried to get up I felt the frantic desperation of a freshly caged wild animal mixed with a knowing that time was running out. I felt the presence of my fellow chosen travellers, but I couldn't speak to them. (Hardwicke-Collings, 1993)

Clearly, Jane has thought about her experiences after the birth and has used the metaphor of an animal to convey the non-cognitive awareness of her experience. The non-cognitive awareness is further conveyed by her claim to have awareness of those around her and her inability to speak to them. Moreover, some of us may be able to identify with this description of experience, either in birthing, or in some other domain. It is not clear to me that this is a distinctly feminine characterisation of experience, suggesting that the domain of birthing shares some characteristics of other intense experiences.

In this section I have argued that the birthing experience is like erotic or mystical experience insofar as it entails a loss of cognitive awareness. I have suggested that the erotic dimension of birthing is often denied, but that the current power relations between the doctor and the woman opens the erotic aspects to abuse. Nevertheless, I think that the silent aspect of birthing experience is important and needs to be taken seriously. I now explain why claims about the mystical nature of birthing are authoritative despite the silent nature of these experiences.

A birthing woman is potentially qualified to report her experiences in a way that others cannot. Her authority is constituted by her particularity as the unique person in this situation *and* by her epistemological competence, to the degree that she has developed it: her authority increases proportionately according to her ability to identify her non-cognitive states as the kind of states they are.

In the least informative manner of authority, anyone who has given birth and has remained conscious throughout the ordeal - and I maintain that the abovementioned sovereign states are conscious; whereas general anaesthesia renders someone unconscious - can at least say authoritatively "I know what it is like to give birth" even though they may not say much else about their experience. The experience is among those to which her use of the first person pronoun refers: her saying "I" thereafter refers to a person who has experienced childbirth. The use of the first person pronoun is related to sovereignty in Bataille's sense, and sovereignty, I will argue, in turn to birthing.

I begin with a general picture of minds occupied with linguistic thoughts. Most of us spend most of our waking time chattering to ourselves or to others, thinking intentional thoughts: what to cook for dinner, what to wear tomorrow, how to plan the next holiday, how to get home from work, picking up children from school; or interpreting information from the media, work and interactions with others. Some of these thoughts might produce experiences intimately related to my self-identification. For example, planning the skiing holiday causes a frisson as I imagine the sense of my stomach lurching as my legs work over those bumps at high speed. Or I might contemplate the feeling of salty sun stretching my skin as I lie on a deserted beach someplace. Or my stomach jumps as I think of the smell in the butcher, in a different way from the sensations I feel when I think about how to dress to attract some sexy person's attention. And so on. Thinking about these things causes the self awareness which is fundamental to self-knowledge by noticing what produces the embodied presence and when I am unaware of myself as such. I can think about more abstract issues and facts for long periods, not even noticing myself to satiate hunger thirst or other such

needs on the basis that I eat, drink, walk, talk, sleep and pee as though on automatic pilot.

The difference between self-reference and sovereignty is that the former involves an "I" thought while the latter, though central to first-person embodied experience, does not. Self-awareness is not sovereignty whenever there is cognition involved. Sovereignty is awareness in the absence of cognition. The distinction between self and world necessary in thought is lost to the state described in the "I" thoughts of the situation in question.

But though a woman may lapse at times into sovereign experience in Bataille's sense during childbirth, this is not the essential character of her mind, and these moments do not undermine her epistemic or human authority over her own experience. Her mind is no weaker than anyone else's simply in virtue of the fact that she is giving birth, although I have specified that there are times in which she is sovereign and silent. Her non-cognitive states and behaviour are not immature versions of cognition, being instead the embodied states described above. Her authority about these states is determined by her general competence with regard to self-knowledge.

The Cartesian conception of self-knowledge, dressed by Hegel as either feminine commonsense and abstract masculine concepts clearly influences the medical discourse on birthing. The pregnant woman is a body-machine, an automaton or a child, whose embodied process are not understood in relation to her sense of herself as a human person. The pregnant and birthing woman has closer proximity to the non-cognitive states of that domain. But the medical discourse suggests she has no expertise, only mute experience, and the pregnant woman is then advised forget anything another woman tells her which is not included in the medical explanation of process.

Birthing is an intimate, scary and threatening domain for many of us. Our concern for a healthy normal baby leads us to allow ourselves to be treated as an object known by another; as a birthing body-machine about which we know nothing at all. It might seem to many to be perfectly unnatural to have one's legs hooked up in stirrups to give birth, for instance. But when you are a woman in a contemporary Western culture, you grow accustomed to having people inspect your vagina, so the stirrups are commonplace. We do not question these practices.

Or, if we do question medical practices there are certain social structures in place to make it more difficult than it is for those who do not. Freedom to speak one's mind is a small reward for the birthing woman. The structures in which her birthing is situated and observed are capable of restraining the woman who in another context is free to fly alongside any man. The Hegelian family is reinstantiated in medicine and violates a woman's autonomy insofar as her knowledge is disregarded in the birthing process. And all this is made possible by endorsing a false view of first person authority.

Postscript: mothering in a general economy[88]

In chapter one I introduced Hegel's theory of psychological differences between the sexes. I want here to show that his production of femininity is essential for helping him to explain the difference between natural living mechanistic systems and humanly created social systems on one hand and between organic and inorganic bodies on the other hand. The feminine mind must be an uninterrupted organic mechanistic system, determined solely by the causal laws of nature (at least until man is able to produce life in a laboratory). The feminine mind is fully realised as a *human* mind in Hegel's *ethical order*: Everybody needs to have their natural organic needs met, so for Hegel the woman's role is to meet the needs of those who are too busy doing the important work of creating a rational social system to look after themselves. The fact that there is an ethical order provides the evidence for his behavioural explanation of the natural living mechanism as distinct from a non-living mechanism.

Hegel thus characterises a social order in which there exist two kinds of behaviour: natural behaviour and self-constructed behaviour. Our capability to engage in two kinds of behaviour – caring behaviour and rational behaviour – according to Hegel's account of the ethical order explains how there can be two kinds of human subject: the natural subject and the socially created subject. The existence of natural subjects, or mothers, is essential to show that some sensory knowledge is innate and given by the mechanism and for Hegel the concept of having life marks the beginning of subjective

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[88]This chapter, incomplete, was intended as a conclusion, and is included here because it brings together some of the themes of the thesis. -eds.

knowledge, and this subjective knowledge is necessary for sustaining life. Having the concept of self, on the other hand, marks the beginning of objective knowledge, or rational development, and retaining this concept is necessary for a final attainment of the non-cognitive Absolute.[89] The woman's purpose is defined by persons whose social status is determined by Hegel's mastery of all the major concepts presented in the history of mankind.

But, as I have argued, Hegel's own mastery of the concepts of human history entails taking the concept of life as given in the first step in the development of subjective psychology. This means that he uses a psychological predicate as the foundation for his epistemological *telos*. He effectively reverses the telos by taking experiences as necessary but not sufficient for epistemic development, on the basis of his recognition that we are born into a history which makes our roles socially and politically meaningful. Hegel does not doubt that our roles are socially and politically determined. But he is not so clear about the relationship between the natural body as an organic mechanism and man made mechanisms. In the end, man can only know that he is different from a robot by separating out the life giving function of females. The life giving functions of females are thus brought under the rubric "nature;" a term already used to define the social contract, and to draw attention to those whose lives are "nasty, brutish and short."[90] But, the social contract, after Kristeva and Bataille are taken seriously, is not already free from bias about who can have power, about what

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[89] This view is held by Hippolite, in his discussion of ineffability in chapter one. The idea that sense-certainty is already cognitive is evident in this discussion.

we can know and about how we should live. Nor is the term "nature" in its most organic sense, properly understood. Once Hegel has finished with it, the term describes anything whose explanation can be reduced to strictly scientific explanations of role or function. The female of the human species is thus described as having the role of giving and sustaining life and of meeting the requirements of human bodies from the beginning of life through until the body is disposed of according to social rituals and practices.

The only others who are authorities on the body in western civilisations in the time frame between Aristotle and Descartes are the Christian fathers, or the mystics. The woman's function included tending to basic health needs, using herbal remedies as medicines and employing midwives to help with birth, death and serious illness. Historically speaking, the domain of medicine was shared between the brotherhood of a Christian faith and the people, or the general public who held commonsense knowledge about signs of health and about the practical use of plants, foods and discipline.[91] Hegel concedes that the source of all knowledge is empirically founded in commonsense discourse, but he does not fully explain the relationship between life and meaning. He says that both life and meaning are given in the mechanism, but he is unable to show how life is meaningful without God, at the end of the *phenomenology* giving the individual an Absolute knowledge which is at once non-cognitive and ineffable. That which is both cognitive and ineffable is represented by Hegel as *sense-certainty* so that having a concept of life is cognitive. But the idea that sense-certainty is cognitive suggests that human purpose is determined by our biology.

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[90] See Rachels (1993) for a discussion of the merits and problems with social contract theory.

[91] See Inglis (1965), for instance, for a discussion of the history of medicine.

Hegel's Absolute vindicates the authority of mystical experience: it is just that, as Bataille argues, for Hegel there are no non-cognitive states of mind until the subject has mastered all the concepts of history with which we are each endowed, but above which only the male can rise to embody the fully human creation: the social system.[92] Hegel's construction of sexual difference enables a recognition that the human mechanism is organic, for the woman brings some human bodies in alignment with nature rather than culture, serving to explain the organic nature of the human mechanism.

Her embodiment is conventionally moulded into the roles Hegel makes women's business: caring for others. The natural roles of the woman require that her knowledge is commonsensical, but as such remains in the realm of mere opinion (doxa) rather than as properly acquired knowledge (episteme).

Hegel divides people into two groups according to sex, associating the woman with her sensuous body. The mind is a metaphor of male advancement and human progress and civilisation whereas the body is a metaphor for the female reproduction of life. Men's knowledge is potentially rational, having superceded the particularities of embodied knowledge to develop reason which is untainted by passion, turning civilised beings into psychozombies. The psychozombie is a person whose epistemic authority is granted in virtue of cutting off feelings, and constructing the self as an individual member of the social order. But, in Hegel's account of sexual difference, read through the feminists discussed in this thesis, it remains possible that the maternal body is a zombie. He fails to show how the mother knows she is not a zombie, raising the possibility that Hegel's empirical

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[92] Sir Richard Attenborough's documentaries about natural systems of life are enough to start us wondering about the force of the opposition between nature and culture.

knowledge is grounded by sense data rather than by commonsense. The interaction between men and women is important, I think, for Hegel to show that men are not zombies. In their private lives, men have access to the feelings of embodiment, reflected to them by their wives and mothers. But Hegel's conflation of perceptual knowledge with commonsense does not permit authority for women on the basis that all commonsense knowledge is *given*. As I have shown, particularly in my discussion of Young's account of *pregnant embodiment* any sensual knowledge which is given as the kind of knowledge it is leaves room for scepticism about the reality of embodied experiences.

More serious is the idea that subjective commonsense knowledge must be superseded by stoic rationalism so that someone can have a position of social status. Hegel supports a kind of individualist epistemology in which those who have the most power and status create themselves as powerful and important in the eyes of others. The price these men pay for their power is the loss of subjective experiences their stoic rationality demands. But the price is high for the women who are taken into relationships with men in the slave position: the vulnerability of women on the basis that they have not superseded embodied knowledge makes us slaves to those whose bodies are unimportant in relation to their ideas. Men become masters only by alienating themselves from embodiment; but the same alienation is thought to be impossible for women as mothers.

Hegel's characterisation of sexual difference embodies the false assumption that there is a universal experience of being female; and a different universal characteristic of males. The universal female experience is determined by the ability to create life. In the hope of understanding what kinds of psychological states are involved in the creation of life, I have ventured to show that even

the most mystical states are shared between us, irrespective of our genital status. In other words, maternal psychology is not especially distinctive: there are no special states that are not encountered in other domains. So, in conclusion I shall agree with Kristeva that sexual difference has no essential bearing on our states of mind.

I shall repeat Kristeva's call for a heretical ethics, calling us to recognise within ourselves a combination of three essentials: language, flesh and jouissance. Recognising jouissance calls for introspection on the silent darkness of our most sovereign states; but we need language to shed light on the darkness and to help us talk about our diverse perspectives; and we need to focus on the feelings in our flesh with language so that we can describe these as the kinds of feelings they are. The social revision I am imagining demands more value for subjective knowledge within the institutions that define women and men, to concentrate on our shared needs rather than creating differences. In saying this, however, I must emphasise that this is not an attempt to smooth over differences. Rather, I think more inclusion of subjectivity in institutional knowledge leads to recognition of the undeniable diversity of perspectives.

Adrienne Rich sums up the American birthing scene until the second half of the twentieth century:

> We were, above all in the hands of male medical technology. The hierarchical atmosphere of the hospital, the definition of childbirth as a medical emergency, the fragmentation of body from mind, were the environment in which we gave birth, with or without analgesia. The only female presences were nurses, whose training and schedules precluded much female tenderness. (I remember the gratitude and amazement I felt waking in the "recovery room" after my third delivery to find a young student nurse holding my hand) The experience of lying half-awake in a barred rib, in a labor room with other women moaning in a drugged condition, where "no one comes" except to do a pelvic examination or give an injection, is a classic experience of alienated childbirth. The loneliness, the

> sense of abandonment, of being imprisoned, powerless, and depersonalised is the chief collective memory of women who have given birth in American hospitals. (OWB: 176)

The situation in Australia was no doubt similar, but is improving to create birthing suites for labouring couples, indicating that the institutions are beginning to integrate subjective knowledge into their practices. Medicine is addressing the definition of birthing from the women's perspective to this extent, but as I argue in chapter six, the changes need to go further towards dismantling the stereotypical woman and mother. I also raised the possibility that birthing is more erotic than we generally think it to be, and that embracing the eroticism of the domain could be a problem for birthing in hospitals. So long as most obstetricians are male, the idea of eroticising birthing is not such a good idea. But taking out the sexual dimension of birthing and creating the imaginary blankness of the mystics supports the theological dialectical vision which makes the woman more like a zombie, or birthing machine than an autonomous human person. Why is the obstetric profession so male dominated?

I have to admit to having a homebirth because I figured that was the option which gave me most control in the process. Obviously the midwife was second to none and my partner's participation was never questioned as important backup. He did all the helping work and caring work that nurses do in hospitals, and he continues to share the care of the child. My own experiences of birthing and parenting have not been mainstream, making clear the limitations of the institutions which punish us in subtle ways for not abiding by entrenched standards and practices of maternity. I therefore suggest that we need to look carefully at the norms of western democratic societies to see how much has changed at the level of institutions.

Kristeva writes

> One does not give birth in pain, one gives birth to pain: the child represents it and henceforth it settles in, it is continuous. Obviously you may close your eyes, cover up your ears, teach courses, run errands, tidy up the house, think about objects, subjects. But a mother is always branded by pain, she yields to it. "And a sword will pierce your own soul too..." (TOL, 41)

Kristeva claims that the pain of motherhood begins with childbirth and is not limited to childbirth. The experience of childbirth, as a situation in which we are both in and out of control, gives us insight into the falsity of human nature as being either essentially innate (feminine) or constructed (masculine). So the pain we bear as mothers is as much the suffering from the limitations of prevailing standards and the resulting self-sacrifice that makes a good mother.

In the body of Kristeva's essay on maternity, arranged around the bold poetic outbursts on the left hand side of the page, she argues that the maternal stereotype is based on the cult of the virgin. Maternity is represented in images and representations of Christ's virgin mother, who mediates between god and man. The pain of this sacrificial mother, whose flesh has no bearing upon her predicament as a mother, is suffered in silence: nor are there words to describe her subjective bliss. The lack of words naturalises the silence, no longer painful so long as philosophers and theologians imagine that there is no flesh to feel. The mother is represented as having some mystical knowledge: neither subject, nor object, but mystical nonetheless.

But reading Kristeva with Bataille, we can see that the mother is sovereign: her silence is only an imagined silence with religious undertones to explain the gift of life. Kristeva contends that the silence associated with maternity sustains a false vision of man against nature. Nature is characterised in this false vision as being outside, or beyond the socio-symbolic contract of human laws and languages. She suggests there is something about maternal

experience that helps us to see that we have misrepresented human subjectivity by suggesting that we supersede nature.

If Kristeva is correct, the self-sacrificing mother models herself on an icon of fleshless being (the virgin mother). But doing this leads to living in that which de Beauvoir calls "bad faith." These days the stay-at-home-mum, who exits her profession to care for children, admits a sense of others' disapproval; as though she is living in "bad faith." To say these women live in "bad faith" is nevertheless to obscure the problem. The implicit assumption that these women ought to join the workforce and have a professional life like any other misses the importance of parenting as skill, dedication and knowledge.[93]

The real problem of women's conditions is produced by a sexual division of labour, and will continue to affect our lives until somebody who counts as somebody recognises that our current vision of a public/private split is harmful to people as persons. The change needs to take place in the institutions and in the homes, but will only do so as the individuals recognise their epistemic and ethical responsibility to change current practices of work and leisure.

I keep hearing whispers that feminism has done her stuff and now the job is done as though the western world gives women equal opportunity. Indeed, I might have agreed with the view when I was younger, but not since having a child. Even though single motherhood is reasonably well accepted these days, and the myths of getting pregnant for the sake of getting a government subsidy are recognisably false, the situation for single parents

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[93] Sara Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking* (1989) gives us good insight into the epistemic work of parenting.

raises the spectre of family values. It is clear from the ideas presented in this thesis that the mother is the person who is supposed to have a more intimate bond with her child. But what is this special bond? I have shown that the deeply feminine side of consciousness is best characterised as the non-cognitive sense of something which turns out to be a sense of self for a better way of putting it. But, in the experience, this so called feminine consciousness is silently felt by the person having the experience: there is no distinction between subject and object; self and world. The body is a feeling thing in the world; this is the non-cognitive self; feminine consciousness is dumbed by silence. This kind of consciousness is not especially related to maternity, unless we think her birthing experience is mystical in a religious sense. But if we agree with the religious view of maternity, we must accept the sexual division of labour which is so clearly oppressive for women. Remember, Hegel's dialectic is too theological, according to Bataille, taking reproduction for granted and making all expenditure of energy useful to a productive and accumulative end. So, the non-cognitive consciousness is shared by all and, if Bataille is correct, understanding the value of the non-cognitive consciousness will help us see how to revise the social without this binary value system attributed on the basis of sex.

Why call this consciousness feminine? In Hegelian terms, the feminine consciousness is natural and is repressed by the self-construction of men as particular types: like philosophers, historians, workers. In the family, the man falls back into a universal as a father and the woman finds her individuality in her mothering, but only because she is the wife of a particular man. Hegel makes the woman's body a living metaphor for the states of mind he thinks are most natural; and stands himself as a man against these kinds of conscious states, making his own rational and

constructed. The natural states include all knowledge of the immediate environment including, I imagine, folk psychological states. The constructed states include knowledge of abstract entities and logical arguments.

But the problems with this distinction are clear. First the natural states and language must be given. Hegel does not question the source of meaning as being in Spirit, however, suggesting that all knowledge is innate: given in sense data. So, for him the woman will have instinctual knowledge, or maternal instinct, from which they know how to mother. I think it is very dangerous to appeal to maternal instinct as a kind of knowledge because it circulates widely enough that women continue to be surprised that they have to teach an infant to suck her breast; or from preventing women calling for help when they feel that they want to kill the baby; or from admitting that they need time away from the baby to maintain their own sanity.

The view I am proposing makes clear that the sexual division of labour is an ideology which harms people. There is nothing about being a female, or a mother that makes a woman any more or less responsible for her child than anyone else. The psychological states of maternity are as rich and diverse as psychological states can be. But recognising that this is true calls for a revision of parenting: what do parents need to do to prevent the crisis unfolding around us: with children taking guns to school; with widespread depression and use of antidepressants; with high unemployment and youth suicide rates; with increasing gang violence and anti-globalisation activism; with planes bombing and killing in the United States; and with the war against terror well underway?

This is where I warm to Kristeva, and I think her role as a psychoanalyst helps her to see the deep-seated pain of many people. She warns us of a global crisis in *New Maladies of the Soul*: with drugs, violence, anti-

depressants, media-zapping and commodity fetishism all attempts to fill the void of castration. Insofar as castration is a metaphor for cutting ourselves off from ourselves so that we become someone we think everyone else wants us to be, the crisis is a result of ignoring certain kinds of sensuality. The incest taboo is an important reminder of the institution of marriage as an exchange of women between men.

Women have been, and still are to varying degrees, the property of men. Throughout most of our documented history, women have had no rights, and often no money of their own so they needed a husband to survive. Women's liberation has made some changes, but it is false to think that all battles are won and that women do have equal rights with men. Simply changing the workforce to accommodate women is not enough to change the situation for women; particularly not for women as mothers. There is a widespread belief that women should do most of the caring because that feels more natural. I think it is important to realise that it is not natural just because it feels natural. The problem is that we have learnt to think about some of our feelings and to ignore others by adopting the stereotypical role of a mother. Worse, women who do not fit the stereotype are in grave danger of becoming institutionally dependent.

But there are new role models appearing for mothers which help to make way for social change. Kristeva and Chodorow are amongst those whose success can be detected by looking at the changes in parenting practices. The practical importance of academic theory cannot be denied in the recognition that some mothers and fathers have worked hard to allow both their daughters and their sons both a stronger sense of self and a softer sensuality. Our younger generations become more vulnerable when they integrate this change because they are not so castrated. Kristeva and Chodorow build upon

de Beauvoir's recognition that woman is created by man's stories about her, rather than *given* by nature, that being the empirical world, or by God. Seeing that women are whatever we think we are opens the way for change, and so changing practices evolve as a result of theory.

My hope is that persons from the younger generations are less scarred by castration than the generation of men and women who take power in the current global climate. As a result of changed parenting practices we recognise that not everyone is intent on breeding ladies and gentlemen; but that those institutions which are so interested are intent on reproducing the power symbolised by masculinity. Lacan's idea of the order of the phallus is thus enlightening: the socio-symbolic order is the ordering of objects in relation to subjects. Every speaker is like a penis, according to the metaphor, because the subject of modernity is so intent upon himself being seen as an upstanding figure in society. Fashioning the penis upon man is like fashioning man on god and the metaphor fails to account for experience. For, when we see ourselves in the mirror as having flesh and when we use language to describe that flesh, what can we do to represent the feelings which are lacking in the mirror image? The mirror image is a shadow, it is explained physically, but it is not physical substance.

In Lacan's theory, the mirror image takes us out of experience and into speech. Inside each of us there is empty space filled with silent feelings that we have to learn to ignore and pretend does not exist: the silent pleasures and pains of experience are always obscured from public view. But these can be expressed at home, in the heterosexual marriage which constrains all sexual experience as though it ought to be only between one man and his wife. When a man and his wife reproduce, they reproduce the biological and the social; the given and the constructed. Like Hegel, Lacan associates the

mother with the given and the father with the constructed. But, whereas in Hegel's view the body is given with its sensuality and the rational mind is constructed; in Lacan's view experience is given and sensuality is repressed so that we become rational. The mother, and the polymorphous perversity of infancy with which she is associated is cast out of view and hidden in the private domestic sphere while the father still goes out to work.

We can see how Chodorow and Hartsock draw upon this story. Boys recognise that men have power and women do not and are threatened that they lose their power by remaining too close to their mothers. Boys identify instead with their absent all-powerful fathers who are away working in an important job earning money to keep the household running. Girls identify with mothers who work at home as unpaid mothers and learn by watching and trying. More mothers involve their sons in domestic work, and/or entered the workforce; fathers are becoming more involved with childcare and domestic work, and the situation begins to change. The fact that the situation does change demonstrates the pliability of gender: we no longer become the sorts of girls and boys, women and men, or mothers and father we are told we should be. But we do remain dependent on theories to guide our actions so that no one is hurt too badly by our actions as non-normative parents. The warning is clear, once we open ourselves to finding our own way through the maze of life, we risk temptation towards anti-social behaviour if we are not careful to plan our way.

The mother is a metaphor for silence in Lacan's theory. (See chapter 3). Any expression of sexual deviance, criminal or otherwise anti-social behaviour is also associated with the mother; as is psychosis and schizophrenia. But the theoretical mother who is called upon in these theories is not a person, female and otherwise maternally related; the

theoretical mother is silence: it is the silence of having an experience that no-one else can see. Bataille warns that it is not open slather on the other side, as those who believe in the law maintain. Instead it is a matter of carefully negotiating a path in life in which we care for both ourselves and for others. (See chapter 5)

The idea shared by not only Young and Hartsock, but also Lacan, is that only mothers know what it is like to be a mother and that they cannot tell anyone else what it is like because their experience is deeply private and other worldly. Kristeva follows Lacan in his erroneous view that experience is incommunicable and is somehow outside language. Kristeva agrees with Bataille that experience is communicable even though it is meaningless in itself. She agrees with Bataille that the concepts are not given by the experience, and that shared experience is a kind of communication which is non-linguistic. This implies that the human body, as a physical mechanism, is sensitive to other bodies and responds accordingly, changing the nature of experience. Even describing states of the human body, in poetry or in novels, causes others to become involved and for their states to change accordingly. We look, read, think, imagine sounds, tastes, smells and sensations; and we feel. The interface between mind and world is broken down in art, poetry and literature, Kristeva argues, because these disciplines recognise the effect social institutions have on individuals: art, poetry and literature serve to show the mainstream that there are alternatives to the capitalist world view; and that these alternatives are no longer based in theories used to create identities, but in theories which help us understand how to live and how to make changes so that our grandchildren and generations after them can also be sustained. *All* experiences are deeply private and otherworldly when causally explained by the complex organic processes of the human body, but by giving our

experiences a description and by redescribing representations accordingly thereafter we engage in a process of coming to know ourselves and our particular responses to different situations. Our knowledge about ourselves is always in principle public, so Lacan's account of the mother is a dud.

I agree with Lacan that there are two kinds of mental states, cognitive and non-cognitive. I also agree that cognitive states are linguistic and that non-cognitive states are non-linguistic. But I disagree that the non-cognitive states are inexpressible. The presence in the body described by the term *jouissance* is feminine, according to Lacan, who uses this term to describe infantile experience that is fundamentally erotic and perverse, and to suggest that mothers relive this erotic infantile consciousness in maternity. I have already suggested that childbirth could be erotic, but I am sure that this is not the case for most birthing women. I agree with Kristeva, Bataille and Sellars that the silent states are non-cognitive, but that they can be described retrospectively; with Kristeva and Bataille adding that poetic language and erotic literature evokes non-cognitive states in us. We may become aware of the way we respond physically to different kinds of language and representations.

Those of us who want the best of both worlds, both professionally and as parents, might take heed of Kristeva's views about the subject, or nature of self as neither feminine or masculine, female or male. Kristeva argues that the self is an integration of experiences into a process of linguistic interpretation and understanding, despite her misleading image of self and inner screen. But inner speech and impressions intact, we can see the self emerging as that which Kristeva calls the *signifying* space of a third generation of feminism. (NMS: 222) The body of writing of those who inhabit both worlds, professional and parenting, creates a theoretical space for

those of us who see the important interface between theory and practice. We learn from our mistakes and we can warn others about the observed effects of various practices.

The third signifying space for feminism sits in relation to its predecessors, again theoretical spaces, but spaces often filled in discussions of first and second wave feminism. The equality feminists like de Beauvoir were superseded by feminists of difference like Hartsock and Young. Kristeva does not fit in either position. She says

> For this third generation, which I strongly support (which I am imagining?), the dichotomy between man and women as an opposition of two rival entities is *a problem for metaphysics.* What does "identity" and even "sexual identity" mean in a theoretical and scientific space in which the notion of "identity" itself is challenged? I am not simply alluding to bisexuality, which most often reveals a desire for totality, a desire for the eradication of difference. I am thinking more specifically of subduing the "fight to the finish" between rival groups, not in hopes of reconciliation - since at the very least, feminism can be lauded for bringing to light that which is irreducible and even lethal in the social contract - but in the hopes that the violence occurs with the utmost mobility within individual and sexual identity, and not through a rejection of the other. (NMS, 222)

Kristeva suggests that the sovereign, non-cognitive states associated with maternity and eroticism are irreducible to the social contract. Reproduction sits outside the productive economy. But, in Kristeva's view, childbirth gives the woman an opportunity to see her own sovereignty: to give herself over to experience, and to appear to lose control of her thoughts. In those instances she glimpses the depths of her humanity as an embodied creature. These depths are vulnerable and pliable, and her denial of these makes her both defensive and aggressive. But Kristeva does not recommend association between vulnerability and a passive feminine consciousness in opposition to an aggressive and active masculine consciousness. To do so, she says, is a

problem for metaphysics because the reduction to one side or the other of this dichotomy cuts off the importance of either a rational mind or a sensuous body. The self is divided in each of us, between that of which we are conscious and our unconscious states: but our states need not be unconscious so that we can think rationally; feelings and passions are not mutually excluded by reason.

To think that feelings and reason are mutually exclusive is to neglect the body in a metaphysical dualism. The metaphysical dualism reduces the self to mind and the mind to spirit without explaining the function of inner experience as having anything to do with the body. But spirit is valued as reason, rather than as the less human, more natural feelings. When types of consciousness are differentially valued, the natural is lost in favour of the advanced and constructed. The error, of course, is to think that the constructed is not also natural. The metaphysical distinction between the social and the natural is a false distinction. Instead, the distinction between social and natural is produced by us in our theories. The attempt to reduce ourselves to explanation as either social or natural is unhelpful to improve the social situation.

We can read de Beauvoir, for example, as saying that woman is socially constructed and take this to mean she is not also natural because the two are mutually exclusive. Or we can read Hartsock as saying that woman's psychology is naturally sensual and caring; and that men are trained to fit certain masculine stereotypes modelled on the cold unemotional responses that some males exhibit (as though no one else can). But I think that the Sellarsian story identifies the first metaphysical problem: this kind of distinction between the subjective and the objective smacks of the myth of the given. The myth suggests that meaning is not given by experience after

all: for if it were, there would be no way to show that we are not zombies. Our bodies read off the world, we learn to make observations by redescribing what we see, hear or otherwise sense in the context we learn about them. There is no split between mind and world, or nature and culture. The body is endowed with sensations and we need to learn to concentrate on some and not on others according to what is permissible. And here Kristeva and Bataille, with Lacan and Marx in the background, help us to see how important the issue of prohibition is in creating our identities. But the creation of a singular identity as a man or as a woman smothers an important repression of experience as necessary for understanding value. The repression of experience is already taking on the values of the man who needs a wife to sustain him and to give him children.

So metaphysical dualism, when recast as a distinction between inner experience and linguistic concepts, subordinates the former to the latter in the creation of specifically human values. These values divide, at the juncture between men and women, to warrant justification by both experience and by principle. But, in the end, principle is the only means of justification, making the production of singular objective human value farcical. Physical value is placed in objects rather than in beings, and women, blacks and variations on the theme of *others* are treated like animals, while those who keep the law are treated as persons.

The neglect of the body is not permitted for women, whose bodies are naturally productive, and where the subject just is the self created rational man. But this ideal of what humans ought to be is not shared by everyone. Moreover, this ideal is an ideal of mankind in which the man figures as someone whose very creation requires someone else to look after him because his is too busy and too important to do basic manual labour. His

status is accorded by an interpretation of human reason as replacing the quagmire of natural sensations. The self-made man is a problem for metaphysics because he creates a world of dependency, creating violence and despair for those who do not follow the rules according to predetermined status as some kind of identity. The woman's identity has no status unless she is a mother, on Hegel's view, because the woman's natural consciousness make her aware of her body, and being aware of the body is a sign of immaturity.

Kristeva does not appeal to bisexuality as though each of us are both feminine and masculine. The metaphor of a bisexual does not work because gender obscures the importance of individuality to change the social situation. The social order that we have is established, on her view, by setting up rival groups in which there are always victims and executioners. But Kristeva claims that we are each both victim and executioner irrespective of our sex: our vulnerability makes us a victim in some circumstances and standing up for ourselves makes us executioners. Kristeva's *subject in process* is both strong and vulnerable: she is free from any singular identity, redefining herself through her experiences of a lifetime. Maternity is an experience that potentially affects our identity because of our children's dependence on us; but the same holds for paternity when we recognise that fathers are subjects in process as well.

Kristeva attempts to show that the fundamental separation of Lacan's subject between inner experience and language is healed among those who learn to engage in the incessant process of self-analysis. (NMS, 223) "

> From that point on, the other is neither an evil being foreign to me nor a scapegoat from the outside, that is, of another sex, class, race, or nation. I am *at once the attacker and the victim*, the same *and* the other, identical *and* foreign. (NMS, 223)

When we are attacked by bears, or we get lost, or we are late for a meeting we encounter the alterity within ourselves and shared between us all. The shared fact is that we respond by feeling and behaving in characteristically human ways. But we also know that we tailor our responses according to standards of acceptability. So the individual is analysing herself and others according to these standards, and feeling the way we are supposed to, or not, depending on who we are. But recognising any of this entails identifying as someone who knows the rules, and knows which ones can be broken in order to make way for a new ethics "herethics." (223-224)

> The imaginary helps to outline an ethics that remains invisible, as the outbreak of the imposture and of hatred wreaks havoc on societies freed from dogmas and laws. As restriction and as play, the imaginary enables us to envision an ethics aware of its own sacrificial order and that thus retains part of the burden for each of its adherents, whom the imaginary pronounces guilty and responsible, though it offers them the direct possibility of jouissance, of various aesthetic productions, of having a life filled with trials and differences. This would be a utopian ethics, but is any other kind possible?

The outbreak of imposture and hatred is worsening as people feel less safe in western societies. The freedom so cherished in the west was never women's liberation. To be sure, women have entered the professions, and changed the face of predominant institutions. But only to some extent. Leaving women or men at home alone with babies is not the easy answer because of the effective lack of community in the suburbs. Childcare facilities are wonderful, but the participation of both parents in full time work leaves everyone tired and irritable without time for the kids. The utopian ethics might therefore start by reducing working hours and dividing up all positions into job-share. With more people entering professions this might serve to open more positions to fresh faces and ideas. But to do this would be a great

act of social generosity which those who live to take will find untenable. And as I have shown, those are the persons who have the power, albeit perversely.

....

Man as rational human and woman as proof of the worldly nature of embodiment helps Hegel to overcome the sceptical questions arising from his externalist explanation of the world. Hegel sees the connection between cognition and language,

Pregnancy, birthing, and maternity are the ultimate experiences, necessary for ongoing species survival. The domain has assumed some status as distinct from other human domains. But the status accorded to mothers is the status removed when technology booms: the privilege of having expertise on matters of life and death is superseded by the creative power of man. The accursed share is explained out of existence through our focus on productivity rather than expenditure.

Even though femininity is a descriptive term, it is used by Hegel to describe sensuous knowledge; by de Beauvoir to describe certain kinds of behaviour; by Young to describe private knowledge; by Kristeva to describe a painfully pleasurable consciousness; by Hartsock after Chodorow to describe relational consciousness; and by Bataille to describe the death of self-consciousness. There is no evidence that any of these descriptions apply to females.

...

Hegel describes the interaction between two different kinds of psychological states: one given by nature and the other created by man. The natural states are produced by the human body, irrespective of the sexual anatomy and physiology of that body. But anatomy and physiology do not bear on psychology, in the course of human development, to explain the process of rising above the animal kingdom and standing against nature to

take control of the planet and the universe. Hegel tells a story about mankind: each moment in the unfolding of his *phenomenology* represents not only the individual's personal history, but also the historical development of life on earth.

The most primordial psychological state Hegel describes is sense-certainty. This sentient awareness is shared by all living things. The wheels of cognition begin to turn in the next step of advancement, explaining perception; and leading to a common sense understanding shared within the species. For the human female, according to Hegel, this common sense understanding is as good as it gets, leaving her psychology limited to all which is given naturally by the senses; but in the case of human males the common-sensual psychology is superseded, or made redundant, making way for the personal and historical development of intentional thought and civilisation. Human progress begins with self-consciousness and the recognition by man that he can control his own destiny. This recognition enables man to create himself anew as the kind of being that he wants to be.

But as we have seen, the history of mankind leaves woman behind because her natural mode of production is valuable. Female psychology is deeply sensual, on this view, developing an understanding grounded in her immediate environment. Her intuitive awareness is highly developed and her natural duty is to deal with matters of life and death to maintain survival of the species. It is quite natural for humans to speak, so there is no question as to whether the woman uses language; it is just that her language is limited to concepts based in perception: the woman cannot make inferences, however, because to do so requires having self consciousness and this, in turn, requires ignoring the sensual and focussing on abstract concepts.

Simone de Beauvoir argues that Hegel's understanding of woman's psychology is based on the assumption that her reproductive function makes her more animal than human. de Beauvoir here describes two kinds of psychological states, immanence and transcendence, which she sees as necessary to all members of the species. But, if de Beauvoir's immanence fits anywhere in Hegel's phenomenology, I take it to be another term for sense-certainty. Unlike Hegel, however, de Beauvoir does not characterise sense-certainty as immediate knowledge, suggesting instead that immanence is non-cognitive. Transcendence, on the other hand, describes the knowing subject whose knowledge can only be confirmed in virtue of intersubjectivity. De Beauvoir argues that maternity does not prevent the woman from developing the transcendent consciousness; but that the woman is taught from an early age to think and behave as though she is the natural sensuous being men throughout history have imagined her to be. By doing what is expected of her, the woman creates a prison, not only for herself, but for all women, because men can point to her to show deviant (m)others how they are supposed to be. De Beauvoir therefore recommends that the woman joins men in public life, even if she is a mother.

In chapter two, I turned more directly to the question of what it is like to be pregnant. Iris Marion Young argues that the pregnant woman is a divided subject, having access to both public communicable knowledge (in the head) and private sensual knowledge (in the torso). The special authority of the pregnant woman is guaranteed by her privileged access to the sensations of pregnancy. But this private knowledge claim is Cartesian: knowledge about physical facts can be shared suggesting that the special knowledge is based in a non-physical fact. This claim leads to the possibility of zombies who are just like humans in all respects except that they do not have any experiences. The

possibility of zombies shatters the authority of the pregnant woman's knowledge unless Young can prove how she knows she is not a zombie.

Wilfrid Sellars provides a better explanation of first person authority because, unlike Descartes or Hegel, he starts his explanation of knowledge in the third person. Epistemic development does not begin with immediate knowledge given by the senses, clouded and confused initially and developing into mature judgements in time. Rather, the process of epistemic development is explained by a range of innate abilities which are causally necessary for knowledge but which, in themselves, are non-cognitive. The human body can be conceived mechanistically, as a complex thermometer which reads off the environment and responds by exhibiting certain sorts of behaviour and making sounds. But biological development is influenced by a range of environmental and social factors so that everybody will differ slightly to mirror their environment and social situation. First person authority is only developed after the person can describe her broader situation, based on shared observations, with knowledge about the standards and practices of agreement. She must therefore learn to use her natural language competently and know what it is that makes her competent. In other words she must have third person authority to have any authority at all.

Third person authority would be impossible if the human species did not have shared psychology. Hegel recognises this; and he recognises, contra Descartes, that first person *authority* is not given simply in virtue of having a human body. But Hegel distinguishes between first person knowledge, which is universally shared between all of us, and first person authority, which is particular to the individual in question. In Hegel's view, we know the contents of our own mind before we know anything else, but we cannot have

authority until we can separate ourselves out from the contents, and take control of what is happening in our own minds. He claims this is man's prerogative: childbirth and maternity need to remain natural to explain man's self-knowledge in the personal rather than professional domain of life.

Sellars dismantles the distinction between the content of one's mind and the self as a distinct viewer of these contents. The viewer, to stay with the analogy for a moment, is reduced to her (or his) body as this mechanism which reads off the environment and responds, learning from others how to make observations, and to use language appropriately. Over time, and with competence, the embodied person *qua* viewer recognises herself as a viewer. The person sees that her behaviour mirrors the behaviour of others and that different behaviours are correlated with different patterns of thought. But seeing all this is really a matter of self-talk, and the person recognises this by using the local folk-theory of psychology to interpret her own behaviour. The process of interpretation enables her to identify a range of non-cognitive states, or feelings throughout her body and to recognise the chatter of inner speech. According to Sellars, every person's general awareness is caused by embodied processes and cognitive development enables us to make sense of this awareness in concert with the ways others make sense of their own. The viewer thus determines the contents of her own mind according to what she is thinking, and how others respond to her, making her the kind of person she is.

In my view, dismantling the distinction between the person and the contents of her mind leads to a recognition that the very idea of feminine and masculine psychology is a false dichotomy. In Chapter three I presented Kristeva's attempt to revise the psychology of the sexes. Her story about early childhood development is like Sellars' thermometer view, but she brings self-

knowledge into the story too soon in concert with Lacan. Unlike Sellars, Kristeva claims the infant has first person knowledge before developing third person knowledge. She does not dismiss the Hegelian distinction between the thinker and her thoughts. But, rather than being a Cartesian first person thinker, in Kristeva's view the thinker has to use language, and to do this she must direct all of her thoughts out onto the external world and cut herself off from her sensuality. The reason for this is that our sensuality makes us behave in an uncivilised manner which is counter-productive in the eyes of those who determine the standards and practices of western culture.

Kristeva argues that the mother has the potential to see the false premises that structure our understanding of human civilisation. The potential privilege is not given in virtue of being a female, in Kristeva's view, being instead a socio-sexual privilege. The privilege is explained by the Freudian oedipus complex: having a penis gives men authority; having babies is a substitute for authority. Having babies permits the woman to return to a sensual state of embodied pleasures, otherwise deemed unproductive (apart from the hetero-sexual intercourse that causes her pregnancy). This kind of state is repressed in childhood development to stop us from exhibiting anti-social behaviour and the process of repression affects our psychology by making us ignore our inner experiences and learn to think like everybody around us.

The person develops as a thinking subject because she is a speaking subject but Kristeva recognises that speech and inner experience are only conventionally exclusive, rather than being necessarily exclusive, of each other. But, as I argue in chapter two, the Cartesian self is also divided between the inarticulable immediate knowledge given by experience and the clear and distinct judgements expressed in language. Like Lacan, she

redescribes these two kinds of psychological states as feminine and masculine: evident in each subject, irrespective of their sex. Her theory of abjection brings in the body as mediating between the world of outer objects described by speech and the non-cognitive domain of feelings. By tailoring our bodies to the standards of sexual difference, we see ourselves as, and are seen as, either masculine or feminine. We are only permitted to see ourselves from the third person perspective, as others see us. The mother, as the silent martyr, is thus constructed.

...

This creates the ideology of persons which presupposes the institutions from which persons are positioned as either cold, impersonal self-made individuals or warm, caring and self-less. The distinction enables Hegel to overcome the difficulty of explaining how two different kinds of consciousness interact. The more primitive non-cognitive consciousness is *given* by the body, in Hegel's view, being more natural and suitable for women whose duty it is to bear and raise children and to look after their husbands. The more advanced intentional consciousness is a human construction, enabling men to become self-made individuals who work together to create and perform within the institutions of public life. The interaction between women and men in the family is necessary for each to have access to the other. Women have access to intentional consciousness as it is mediated by their husbands; and men have access to the sensual consciousness as it is mediated by their wives. Hegel's conception of feminine consciousness endorses the ideology of childbirth as mechanistic production rather than as a properly human experience that the woman can know about rationally. Only men can have a rational authority about anything, including women's bodies, endorsing the establishment of an

obstetric institution run by men. In this chapter I have shown that authority over birthing remains squarely in the institutional domain.

In chapter two I argued that Iris Marion Young's private knowledge argument fails to show that the pregnant woman's maternal experiences can be known rationally. I maintain that Wilfrid Sellars' epistemology is a better alternative for explaining the pregnant woman's authority than any post-Hegelian conception of consciousness. Sellars' view that all cognitive experience is based in theoretical episodes accepts the importance of language in making sense of any experiences including those otherwise thought to be ineffable. Sellars provides a non-Cartesian alternative for understanding maternal authority.

In chapter three I introduced the psychoanalytic theories by which we understand that inner experience must be sacrificed to make way for theory; on the all too Hegelian assumption that inner life is uncivilised. Although Kristeva contests the idea that human sensuality is outside culture and language with her theory about avant-garde poetry, I argue that she does not fully succeed to show how we get to know ourselves as both sensuous and rational. But I agree that her theory of abjection is useful for understanding that the subject and object are not opposed to each other in consciousness, being instead mediated by a third term. The subject and object are epistemic terms, describing cognitive events, whereas the abject describes the non-cognitive domain of human experience, described in this chapter as use of the essential indexical. Kristeva's discussion of abjection upsets the dichotomies used by Hegel to create an ideology of the family based on the abovementioned claims about sexual difference. I agree with Kristeva that there is no essential psychological difference between the sexes.

In chapter four I argued that Nancy Hartsock does not contest the Hegelian vision that women's knowledge is based in experience, but argues that he and other male philosophers falsely value the abstract over the concrete. She draws from Marxian standpoint epistemology to show that the sexual division of labour oppresses women and that their oppression gives them an epistemic privilege. As in chapter two, I argue that epistemic privilege is unhelpful for rescuing the pregnant woman's epistemic authority. But I think Hartsock raises an important issue of value, showing that women's work is not recognised as such; and that men are often reluctant to engage in childrearing and domestic duties. Although I acknowledge theories like Chodorows' have changed parenting among those with raised consciousness, leading to some changes in parenting patterns, I recognise that political institutions continue to disadvantage women. Far fewer women than men have positions of institutional power, most likely because they rarely find partners who are willing to give up their own careers to stay home and do all the domestic work.

In chapter five I turn more directly to the Marxian ideas of alienation and false consciousness to better understand Hartsock's claims about the partiality and perversity of masculine individualism. I identify a serious contradiction in her idea that men are both individual and perverse insofar as these terms are mutually exclusive. As Kristeva demonstrates, the sensuous consciousness is associated with perversion; not the rational consciousness. Turning to exemplar of perversion, Georges Bataille, I identify the source of the contradiction in Marx's conception of sensuous experience in terms of productivity. To better understand experience for its own sake I introduce Bataille's ideal of a general economy in which life is balanced between work and non-productive expenditure, suggesting that this ideal is fruitful for a

more holistic understanding of maternal authority than any theory borne out of a Hegelian dialectic.

In this chapter I have established that Hegelian family values continue to influence birthing practices. The promotion of feminine behaviour and the command to submit a passive mind and body to the care of an active doctor indicate a misunderstanding of the birthing woman's subjective authority. Her psychology is characterised as regressive because she is engaged in non-cognitive bodily states; the same kinds of states each person has simply in virtue of being an embodied person. But, I have argued, this characterisation is based on the Cartesian premise that the mind is incorrigible and incorrigibly given; and that rational thought is impossible in situations like childbirth when the body is difficult to ignore. The idea that we cannot think, either at the time or retrospectively, about our own embodied experiences represents that which Bataille calls the restricted economy, or limited recognition of what human life is about.

I shall begin with an explanation of Bataille's distinction between a general economy and a restricted economy to demonstrate that current discourse on birthing is viewed only in terms of productivity and not in lieu of a broader understanding of the human condition. The preferred general economic view requires looking beyond the limits of a Hegelian dialectic, in which human purpose is solely understood in terms of production and the accumulation of goods and knowledge. My aim in this conclusion is to show that the pregnant woman's authority, as described above, gives us a more holistic view of society than Hegel's dialectical engagement between public and private spheres.

As it became clear in chapter five, Bataille's focus on death of subject is contentious. (Nancy Hartsock interprets his claims about the death of the

subject as endorsing rape, murder and snuff movies.) But the death of the subject is a metaphorical term for breaking out of the restricted economy to embrace the non-productive expenditure: expenditure otherwise ignored as part and parcel of embodied existence. The metaphorical death of the subject by transgressing prohibitions takes the person out of the restricted economy of the public sphere, as it is represented in Hegelian ideology, to include life *qua* embodied experience.

Bataille's general economy is more accepting of the animal-like traits of human existence that Hegel associates with femininity. The general economy thus values the so-called feminine traits and recognises a kind of wealth beyond the restricted vision of economics. The wealth of the general economy recognises the generosity of nature in providing energy and resources which are not there to be bought and sold, but rather to be shared. The same sort of wealth is to be found in intense experience, in Bataille's view, in sacrifice, surrender, and community each of which connect us to others rather than separate us out as rational individuals. The generosity of the general economy is understood through experiences like childbirth.

The view of birthing I am promoting does not sit in opposition to the medicalisation of childbirth. This is not a more natural mode of birthing to replace the instrumental approach. Rather, this is a more general approach which incorporates the best of medical technology, but does so without undermining the authority of the birthing woman by making out her experiences are not an important aspect of her humanity – even if they are incredibly painful and not the kind of venture one would want to repeat too often. The view I am promoting is holistic, rather than reductionist, based on embracing rather than denial of the non-cognitive, demonstrating that the

cognitive aspects of humanity are necessary so that we can better understand and integrate our non-cognitive experiences into our self knowledge.

But there is one important issue that I must add before closing. The situation of mothers in general will not improve without recognition that productivity is implicit in a restricted view of humanity. The more holistic view balances sacred time with working time; non-productive expenditure with productive expenditure. Most of us spend too much time at work and our children are suffering in our absence. This is not women's problem any more: it is the structure of the workforce which needs to change so that both parents can spend more time raising their children, taking time out from engaging in paid work. I have made clear that there is no essential sexual difference when it comes to public life. Having rescued maternal authority from the primordial swamp I have shown that each of us is embodied, sensual and rational, irrespective of sexual and reproductive capacities. It is time now to get to know ourselves better in a way that Hegel suggests is impossible.

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